

195. Do you remember the date on which you received it?—It is dated the 11th March. It was received on the 22nd, and replied to on the 25th.

196. How can you account for what appears to be the case—that a letter dated the 11th March from Mokau did not reach you till the 22nd? Was it a registered letter, do you remember?—I could not say now.

197. I want you to account for what appears to be the case—that the letter was dated the 11th March, and did not reach you till the 22nd?

198. *Hon. Mr. Ngata.*] Was Mr. Bowler in the one place all the time?—I think I was in Auckland for ten days or so before that letter came. I could not be quite certain now.

199. *Mr. Massey.*] You are not able to account for the fact—it appears to be a fact—that the letter was written on the 11th March, and did not reach you till the 22nd?—No, I cannot explain it.

200. Do you remember the contents of the letter?—Yes, I have it here.

201. Will you read it, please?—“Mokau, Taranaki, March 11, 1911.—To the President, Maniapoto-Tuwharetoa Maori Land Board, Te Kuiti.—Sir,—Mokau-Mohakatino Block: On the 29th December, 1909, I wrote to the Hon. James Carroll with respect to certain parties endeavouring to obtain titles adverse to my interests in these lands, and he replied through the Under-Secretary, Mr. Fisher, advising that I should bring the matter to your notice; and on the 17th January, 1910, I adopted this course, but you did not see fit to acknowledge my letter. I have heard indirectly that Mr. Fisher is a member of the Board. No *Gazette* or official intimation reaches me or this neighbourhood. I have, however, heard incidentally that some dealings are being attempted with these lands through the Board. This may or may not be correct, but I would remind you of the before-mentioned letter, and again state that no legally constituted Court of law upon competent trial has decided that my rights in this estate have become void. The Under-Secretary, Mr. Fisher, cannot but be well aware that the Legislative Council Committee of 1908, and the Committee of the House of Representatives, 1910, both reported in effect that I had been defrauded with regard to the title to the lands, and recommended the Government to set up inquiry into the facts, which I have not yet obtained. Please take notice.—I have, &c., JOSHUA JONES.”

202. Mr. Jones there requested you to notify him, as an interested party, of any attempted alienation?—Yes.

203. Did you comply with his request?—I replied to Mr. Jones. I think you read the letter in the House.

204. When did you reply?—On the 25th March.

205. After the alienation had taken place?—After the alienation had taken place.

206. You did not comply with Mr. Jones's request, then, before the alienation took place?—No. In explanation I may say that the Board inquired and ascertained that Mr. Jones's position would not be altered, one way or the other. Any litigative rights he might have were not prejudiced by the sale.

207. Mr. Jones may still have a claim upon somebody?—Quite possibly.

208. Is that the reason why you did not reply?—I suppose the reason why I did not reply for the three days was that the Board was sitting, and I was too busy.

209. Are you aware, as President of the Board, that the Order in Council did not appear in the *Gazette* till several days after the confirmation by the Board took place?—Yes.

210. How did you know that an Order in Council was in existence?—I was advised by Mr. Dalziell, and through my Head Office.

211. Are you in the habit of taking suggestions from counsel representing Maoris in connection with such transactions? Would that have been sufficient for you?—No; I verified it by reference to the Head Office.

212. Have you the letter from the Head Office?—I have a telegram.

213. Will you put that in?—Yes.

214. *Mr. Herries.*] What is the date of the telegram?—The 28th March.

215. *Mr. Massey.*] Are you quite sure of that?—Yes.

216. And the confirmation had been agreed to on the 25th March?—The telegram reads, “Mokau Order in Council signed. Will include this week's *Gazette*.” It is dated the 28th March. There is another one here, dated the 24th March: “Mokau not yet returned from Governor.”

217. It seems to amount to this: that you, as President, and the Board itself, confirmed the alienation of this land without knowing officially that an Order in Council had been issued?—We knew that the matter had been before the Executive.

218. How did you know that?—From Mr. Dalziell.

219. Is that the manner in which you are in the habit of doing business in your capacity as President of the Maori Land Board?—Certainly we take the word of a reputable solicitor. We could always verify it.

220. That is for you to say. I will not comment upon this very extraordinary transaction at the present moment, but it will be my duty to call the attention of Parliament to what has taken place in this connection. Just one other question of importance: You say that you were instructed to convene the first meeting by the Native Minister?—Yes.

221. If you had received this instruction from the Native Minister would you have convened, or allowed to be convened, the meeting of assembled owners?—If we had not received the instruction the Board would have met and considered the matter of calling a meeting. I cannot say positively what the Board would have done.

222. *Hon. Sir J. Carroll.*] Regarding the minutes of the Native committee's meeting held at Te Kuiti on the 4th April, 1911, *re* Mokau-Mohakatino Block, which have been handed in: Who handed you those minutes?—Mr. Hardy gave them to me.