

the accounts and moneys against the lands. And next, as to the accounts. Now, as to the first—the hold on the land—that hold was acquired, as every one here must be perfectly aware of, not by me, but by others. When I came into office, I found that certain rights had been acquired over the lands; and it was my duty to preserve those rights over the land, as of moneys of the Crown, so long as I believed them to be right. Now as to the production of the accounts. Supposing I came up with the whole of the accounts before me, and an account was pointed out and questioned as to the person who got the money, and the ownership, &c., what could I say? No; if these accounts are to be produced one by one in this way, very likely one-half of them will produce further trouble, and the trouble will be further from settlement than ever. In something I must be trusted. Why should I cheat the Maoris? I have no such desire. I will therefore not consent to produce the vouchers in detail, but I will produce an abstract to the satisfaction of any person appointed by the tribe. I take up that position in my desire to see this trouble ended. If it were my desire to see this trouble continue for ever I should perhaps ask the whole tribe to go into each separate account. That is my feeling in the matter.

*Harry Simmonds*: You have stated that you have reason to believe that, even though you are not in the presence of the whole tribe, yet the matter may be arranged.

*Hon. Native Minister*: I understood that the present deputation were to wait upon me with proposals; and I will listen to those proposals. Let me recite a little. You came down to Wellington just as the surveyors were about to proceed to that block to survey it, and made certain representations to me that trouble was likely to take place if the survey proceeded. We all understand that the first preliminary to the real settlement of any trouble, or the purchasing of Native land, is the survey of that land. That appears to me to be the first question. Now, if I am expected to approach the subject, I would ask Harry whether he thinks the same danger exists now to the survey going on that existed then—when he came down to Wellington? If he does, the survey will not go on.

*Harry Simmonds*: The wish of the people is that the restrictions should be removed from the land; and then, if you say that can be done, I will answer your question about the survey.

*Hon. Native Minister*: My belief is, that the survey is preliminary to everything; yet I will answer that because I do not wish to evade anything. In answer to the question, I say this: In the first place—speaking now as the Government—I do not want the land. I can see too many difficulties before me in the way of not acquiring it. I would rather not have the task, provided I can protect the Government interest otherwise. But it is my duty, while I remain a Minister, more than to defend the interests of the Crown; and before the removal of the restrictive Proclamation which is over the land I will see that the Government interests—namely, the moneys spent upon the land—are not lost—in fact, that they will be returned. If I can see my money back I will take the Proclamation off. But I will come back now to what I said at first. It seems to me that in all these difficulties the survey of the block and ascertaining of the ownership is the very first thing to be done. How do we know otherwise who the owners are? You come here as the representatives of the tribe: and most likely you are; but I have no legal information that you are. I must be first told by the Court that you are the owners. Then I know it. This is another thing with respect to the recovery of the Government interests: The Government interests may perhaps amount to between £12,000 and £14,000; but if I were offered £14,000 to remove the Proclamation from this land I would say No; I can only take this money from the owners. The money has been paid, so I am bound to assume, to the owners; and if the money is to be paid back to the Government, it must be by the owners and no others. Therefore I come back again to my original position, and I say, Who are the owners? The land must be surveyed in order that the owners may be ascertained. Preliminary to every settlement, it seems to me that the land must be surveyed. If you tell me now, as you told me in Wellington, that the survey of the block will in all probability cause bloodshed, it will not go on; but if not, the survey—that is, the preliminary survey—that is, the first step to the settlement of the matter—will proceed.

*Harry Simmonds*: If you will promise that the Government will release the land, we will promise that the survey will go on. Then I shall see my way clear to have my land surveyed, the land go through the Court, and the money returned to the Government.

*Hon. Native Minister*: I say that I am willing to remove the Proclamation—I say that quite distinctly; but I must have the money from the owners, and from as many of the owners as I can get it from.

*Harry Simmonds*: I consent to return the Government money, and I would like the papers shown to me to see how much I have to pay the Government.

*Hon. Native Minister*: I have no objection to any one seeing the abstract. But this is a point: I can only deal with ascertained owners as to the recovery of the money. I do not mean to show the vouchers—only an abstract of all the accounts.

*Harry Simmonds*: That was the reason why we so much wished the matter settled at the Waotu—so that you might have an opportunity of judging of the feeling of the people more fully.

*Hon. Native Minister*: I have no doubt that these gentlemen are representatives of the tribe, and the owners of the land very probably. But when the Court tells me there are certain men owners of the land, then I know who are the owners of the land, and then I shall be prepared, when I know the owners, to take the money from them. I will not remove the Proclamation until I have the money from the ascertained owners; and the owners can only be ascertained by the Court.

*Harry Simmonds*: You are content that that land over which the Government Proclamation exists should go through the Court?

*Hon. Native Minister*: Yes; I will allow it to go through the Court of course. A plan will have to be made to satisfy the Court. I cannot deal with any but the ascertained owners. What is the cause of the suspicion in your mind? I give you my word that I will pursue a certain course. Why cannot you accept my word?

*Harry Simmonds*: That is settled.

*Hon. Native Minister*: I have stopped the survey in the meantime. Will Harry tell me that there will be no bloodshed if the surveys go on?