

Mr. J. Sheehan,
M.H.R.

Aug. 9, 1880.

amount allowed to Adam Clark for survey was paid to him. Clark then said to me that he was a considerable expense for food, clothing, and maintenance for this lad Wi Apo, and he asked me to sign with him a cheque for £200. That cheque was drawn there and then in my room—the Provincial Secretary's room in Auckland—and signed by Arama in my presence. I may state that, of course, as Adam Clark is a Maori, and as Mr. Nelson and myself both spoke the Maori language, the bulk of the business was done in the Maori language. The only break in the conversation in Maori was when occasionally it was necessary to refer back something to Mr. Brissenden for his approval or information. From the beginning of the transaction to the end of it I never received a single shilling of the money for myself; nor, indeed, was I offered any. Every operation on the account from the opening of it was concurred in by me at the instance of Adam Clark. Then, I believe, Adam Clark remained in town that day and went away next morning. I do not believe I saw him again at all until he came down here; but I never saw him in respect to the matter, and I did not hear from him in respect to it. The first intimation I received of the allegation on his part that he had not signed this cheque and drawn the money was in 1877. I should explain that about the time that this agreement was signed I had completed my arrangements for leaving for Napier permanently, and in fact I did leave about that time, and, except an occasional visit of two or three days once or twice in the course of the year, down to 1877 I remained in Napier. In Napier, about the beginning of July, 1877, I received a telegram from Colonel Haultain to the effect that he was then being asked to investigate, as Native Lands Frauds Commissioner, the agreement between the grantees and the Government for the sale of the block; and he asked me if I could come up to Auckland for the purpose of giving evidence. I replied to him by telegram, pointing out that the Supreme Court was then sitting in Napier, in which I was concerned in respect of five or six very important cases; that immediately after the Court finished I should be compelled to proceed at once to Wellington, as the House would then be sitting; but that I would willingly answer any questions put to me either by telegram or mail. At this time I had not, of course, the remotest idea of what the particular matter in the inquiry was, and Colonel Haultain did not reply to my telegram, but went on with the inquiry. I came to Wellington immediately on the completion of the business of the Court; and even then I heard nothing of the matter until one day I was informed that a bet had been made between two members of the House (arising out of a party fight which had just then been finished, between the Opposition at that time and the party of which the present Colonial Treasurer was the leader) to the effect that I should be in gaol before I should be in the Ministry. The cheque itself was shown to me just after I was sworn in; and I then moved that it be an instruction to the Public Accounts Committee to inquire into the matter of the Pakiri Block so far as it affected myself. I may add that the matter was to some extent before the Public Accounts Committee at that time, in so far as it affected Brissenden; and therefore the reference was not without some reason. Mr. Brissenden, I believe, was applying for compensation for loss of employment, and also for a settlement of accounts between himself and the Government; and the decision of the Committee is there amongst the papers. Two years elapsed before the matter was again brought forward. I may say that, after the inquiry had been made by that Committee, Mr. Gittos, who was then passing through Wellington—either going south or north, I forget which—called on me at the Native Minister's Office in the Buildings, and expressed himself as very much pleased that I had caused the matter to be gone into. He said that he was still not quite clear about the £20; and I told him that I would say the same to him that I would say to the Committee—that, at that lapse of time, and having entirely ceased to do business in Auckland for several years, I would not undertake to say whether or not I had received the money; but that, if he would give me any reasonable evidence of the fact that the money passed through my hands, I was quite prepared to pay him at once: and Mr. Gittos undertook to do so. That was about August, 1877, I should think. From that time until about the middle of the second session in that year, these petitions which are now before the House were presented. The payments made and the settlement of accounts, if I remember rightly, only covered half the amount which would be finally payable for the total consideration-money, the balance being retained until the difficulties in the way of completing the title were removed. I was informed by Brissenden that he had written to the Government, and had received a reply, the reply being to the effect that they would have a law introduced to enable the Government to acquire these interests—not to validate these particular transactions, but a general measure; and Hori te More, before leaving Auckland for the Kaipara, put in an application in the ordinary way to have his claim heard and his title made good. I do not know whether the Committee wish me to refer to the other two matters mentioned in Mr. Gittos's petition, about not getting a rehearing of the block. That matter was brought before me by Mr. Gittos in 1877, at the same time as other matters to which I have referred, and he asked me if it would not be possible to procure a rehearing of the Pakiri Block. I explained to him that, under the existing law, there having been no application lodged within the six months allowed for a rehearing, neither the Government nor the Court had power to grant a rehearing, and the only authority competent to grant a rehearing was the Parliament itself. I also pointed out to him the extreme danger of setting an example of that kind, and disturbing the title after a lapse of seven years; and I did not think Parliament could do it: but I concluded by telling him that still I would give the matter consideration. I did consider the matter, and came to the conclusion that it was not expedient to grant a rehearing. In regard to the reference in the petition to my having asked him in 1872 to acquire a farm in that district for Mr. Perkins, I do not know whether the Committee want to hear me upon that.

The Chairman: So far as it bears upon this particular petition.

Mr. Sheehan: As to the title of the Natives in that block, I may say that I had never been in that district before the time that Mr. Gittos refers to, but I had gone up there for the purpose of being elected, if possible, for the Rodney electorate. Coming back I halted for a short time at the house of a settler named Perkins, and in the course of the talk which we had while I was having something to eat, he pointed out to me some land, lying, I think, to the north of his house, which he said he would like to acquire the freehold of. I asked him if he knew whether it was Native land or Crown land, and