

Wharerangi Block, which is situated about four miles from Oamaru. It is granted to four grantees, three of whom are directly interested in Oamaru, and the other is a very near relative. I thought that that, at all events, was an argument in favour of this exchange being more fair than the other. Paoro Torotoro was a grantee in both, and a near relative of his named Waka Kawatani, who is since dead, was a grantee in Wharerangi. A Native named Pera, and another named Hemehona, were the remaining grantees of the block. These men are both dead, but their sons lived on Oamaru; one of them is Hohaia, and had lived there some years; so that it seemed to me, as far as interest went, this was an eminently proper block to talk about. Wharerangi Block is inalienable from sale, lease, or mortgage, further than twenty-one years, except by consent of the Governor. It is 1,825 acres, or 1,835 acres, in extent—1,835, I think. It is leased for £100 a year upon a lease which has nine years to run. The rents of the lease are mortgaged for £970, I think, at 10 per cent. interest, so that there has been no rent paid or likely to be paid for Wharerangi during the currency of the lease. I offered to take Wharerangi and give them back Oamaru, and let the difference of price which I was to pay be settled by ordinary arbitration, they appointing one and I the other. At my suggestion, Government sent for some of the leading Natives in Wharerangi during last session to come to Wellington—three or four of them. A meeting was held in one of the rooms of this building between the Natives, myself, and Mr. Cooper. The Natives went back to Napier, having informed the Government they would call the people together and talk this matter over, and probably get the thing arranged in a few days. I went up to Napier during the session expecting to be able to get something settled. When there, I could see there was an unseen power somewhere working against it, and nothing came of it. I telegraphed to the Government the position of the matter and received in reply this telegram, dated the 28th July, 1880: "Government cannot agree to put pressure on Natives to sell Wharerangi. If Government can see its way to secure you £2,500, will you take that to settle business." My reply was: "Have informed Government months ago that I will accept no settlement that I am not prepared to defend in Parliament. I understood that Government would insist upon the surrender of Oamaru as the substitution of Wharerangi upon arbitration basis. I have only asked for what I have every reason to believe I am entitled to, that is, possession of Oamaru, and have agreed to accept its value in another way." After that, so far as I know, no negotiations took place between the Government and the Natives. I have reason to believe there were documents somewhere in the Government offices reflecting upon my conduct in the matter, and establishing a state of things which has been a good deal talked about—namely, that I had become possessed of Oamaru by a legal fluke—that I had no equitable right. That view of the question has been taken on several occasions by Ministers in Parliament. Ministers have stated in their place in Parliament that Government had in their possession documents very prejudicial to me. I applied to see these documents. I have not been able to see them. Documents were laid upon the table last session in answer to a question of mine, but there was nothing in those documents which would carry out that impression. I understand that one document of a rather important nature is missing from the record.

130. How do you understand that?—I was informed so by Ministers last session. It is impossible for me to say what the contents of that document were. I have seen nothing and heard nothing to justify the statements which have been made in reference to my action in this matter. I am not aware at the present moment upon what grounds such statements have been made in Parliament. I am certain that this difficulty could have been very easily settled at the commencement. I have ascertained that, on the first supposed attempt to execute the writ at Oamaru, no attempt was made to execute it, and all these garbled accounts which have been put in evidence here, as to threats of bloodshed, are pure invention. Neither the Sheriff, nor his Bailiff, nor the Inspector of Police, who accompanied them, ever left the trap during the time they were there. They were instructed to bring about a failure, and they did it.

131. By whom? How do you know they were instructed to do that?—I think Mr. Ormond admitted they were instructed. When giving evidence here I asked him: "And that the Sheriff was instructed not to execute the warrant if there was the least show of resistance?" Answer: "I did not say that. I should not like to say anything direct of that kind. My belief is the Sheriff had instructions, which in reality directed the course he took." I have seen the Sheriff's officers' written instructions.

132. Were you present on the 5th March, 1880, at the interview between Mr. Bryce, Mr. Rolleston, and the Natives at Napier?—I was.

133. Mr. Bryce in his evidence, and Mr. Rolleston also in his evidence, stated that Mr. Bryce at that interview said that it would be incumbent upon all three parties to make some sacrifice towards a settlement—that is, Mr. Sutton as the holder of the land, the Natives who claimed the land, and the Government, as representing the country. You heard that said?—I heard that. I should say previous to that, in February, I received a letter from Government in which this occurs: "The question is an exceedingly difficult one, and can only be settled by a disposition to assent to a compromise by all those interested." I replied immediately, I was aware of no obstacle or any difficulty in carrying out the orders of the Court, and was not prepared to make any compromise. So Government, at all events, were perfectly aware of my intentions. That letter is dated the 18th February, 1880. Mr. Bryce's visit was in March.

134. You were present again on the 8th March, at the adjourned meeting of the same parties?—Yes.

135. Now, at either of these meetings on the 5th and 8th March, having heard this proposal of Mr. Bryce's, did you express any dissent from the principle laid down?—I was not referred to at all. Mr. Bryce addressed himself to the Natives; and I did not think it was my place to take any part in it.

136. Were you not there as one of the interested parties, just as the Natives were?—No doubt I was there as an interested party, but I had no information of what nature Mr. Bryce's proposals to me were to be.

137. Between the 5th and the 8th March did you repudiate this mode of settlement?—I did not know what the settlement was to be until the 8th March. On the first occasion the offer was a general one.