

214. And have been for some time?—Yes.

215. Have you had any knowledge of the Horowhenua and Tuwhakaturua Block of country for some years past?—As to the Horowhenua certainly; and also as to the Tuwhakaturua.

216. May I ask whether it was within your knowledge that as far back as 1882 the Government were anxious to purchase these blocks?—I cannot say the Government were anxious to obtain them.

217. Had they ever made advances upon them?—Yes; advances had been made upon the Horowhenua Block. I would explain that I was not in charge of the Native Land Purchase Department in 1882, so that I cannot say anything definite about that time.

218. Are you not aware from the records of the department that the Government opened negotiations for the purchase and made advances?—That is earlier than 1882.

219. Is it not a fact that a portion of those advances still remains owing by the Natives on those blocks?—Recently the purchase was made from Major Kemp of 4,000 acres.

220. Now, was that taken out of the purchase-money for advances previously made upon the block?—No; credit was taken for recent advances made to Kemp. Any old advance has not been taken into account.

221. Was not the whole of the Horowhenua Block under Proclamation?—Yes.

222. Even before 1882?—Yes; I do not remember the date.

223. I believe the effect of that was to give the Government the pre-emptive right?—Yes.

224. And they had made advances on account of purchase-money?—Yes.

225. I have here a copy of a letter addressed to the Minister of Native Affairs, which I believe will be found filed, dated the 10th November, 1882. Can you turn to that, Mr. Lewis?—Yes.

226. You will observe there that an extract is given purporting to be an extract from a letter from the Under-Secretary of Public Works to the Chairman of the company, written by the authority of the Minister for Public Works. [Letter read]. Have you any doubt, looking to that, that the Government were endeavouring to acquire the blocks?—The state of the matter, so far as my general knowledge goes, is that as far as the Horowhenua Block is concerned the state of the title precluded the Government or any one else from dealing with it. It being held under the Act of 1867, Kemp's sole name being in the certificate and a number of other Native names indorsed on it, there could be no dealing with this block unless the Natives were bought out. With regard to the other blocks, the Wellington and Manawatu Company were at this time in negotiation for land on that coast, and it was a matter of utter impossibility for the Government and the company to buy land at the same time. That is to say, the price being given by the company would preclude purchase by the Crown.

227. That would be a reason for delaying purchase?—It would put the Government out of the way of profitable purchase; but the power of purchase still existed and the pre-emptive right remained.

228. The first step towards a satisfactory completion of the purchase of the Horowhenua Block was the subdivision of the land, it being held at the time under the Act of 1867. Was application ever made for a Court for that subdivision?—Not that I remember.

229. There has been a subdivision recently?—Yes; Kemp made an application for subdivision.

230. At what date did he make the application?—I am unable to say, but it was comparatively recently—seven or eight months ago, I believe.

231. There was an application for subdivision?—Yes.

232. For what purpose was it—not for the purpose of dealing with the land?—Yes; Kemp had made a proposal to the Government to cut off portions of this land for a township and suburban land; the idea being to deal with the block in that way, and to divide the balance amongst the persons entitled.

233. Was there not, at the same time, an intention on the part of the Crown to purchase?—Not at that time. It was simply that the Natives should deal with the land independently.

234. But could they do that so long as the Proclamation existed?—The Proclamation, I presume, would have to be withdrawn to enable them to do so. The scheme for dealing with the land was submitted to the Native Minister.

235. But they could not deal with it upon any scheme unless the Proclamation was revoked?—No; but the Government approved of the scheme as a scheme; therefore, I presume the Proclamation would have been lifted, to enable the scheme to be carried out.

236. Assuming the Proclamation to have been removed, what was to have prevented the Natives from disregarding the scheme?—That I cannot say, unless the Government bound them by conditions.

237. It is a question whether that would be binding?—It might have been.

238. At all events, they were barred under the Proclamation?—Yes.

239. Was there not some negotiations between the Government and the company for the removal of the Proclamation to enable the company to purchase?—I do not remember.

240. You cannot say whether or not the Government offered to remove the Proclamation?—No; but there may have been negotiations of which I am not aware before I was in charge of the department.

241. Can you remember an interview that the Chairman of the company and the secretary of the company had with the Native Minister on the 21st May, 1881—or any interview?—I do not remember being present at any interview.

242. Can you remember the circumstances of an interview having taken place?—I am aware that interviews have taken place, but I am not cognisant of what occurred at them.

243. Have you a letter of the 21st May, 1886, addressed to you by the secretary of the company? I will read the letter upon the assumption that it is to be found among the letters in the office. It is as follows:—[Letter read.] Have you any recollection of any such communication as that?—Yes.

244. Had you any interview with the Native Minister in reference to it?—I cannot remember