

83. *Mr. Whyte.*] Suppose that these lands were under negotiation by the Government, and proclaimed, that prevented the company or any one else from buying?—It ought to have done so.

84. You alluded to Major Kemp being hostile?—To me particularly, at that time; but we are now very good friends. The purchase of part of the Horowhenua Block might possibly have come off but for Kemp's hostility.

85. Two or three years had elapsed when you returned to the Government?—Yes, one or two; it might have been two or three.

*Mr. Bell:* The contract is dated the 20th March, 1882.

86. *Mr. Whyte.*] Perhaps you could say whether Kemp's hostility extended to your successor or not?—I believe not. On the contrary, I think Kemp was especially friendly with my successor.

87. So that it was possible to have been bought during that two or three years by your successor?—Yes; I understand that a portion was ultimately bought. I think I might give an explanation here. After the railway had got into a considerable state of progress it was likely enough that Kemp might be unwilling to sell for another reason—namely, that it gave him an opportunity of getting an enhanced price for his land. That by itself would make him unwilling to sell, quite apart from any question of hostility or friendship.

88. *Mr. Kerr.*] There is one thing that I should like to be satisfied about—as to what you meant by saying that “McDonald getting inside Booth?”—I did come to the conclusion that the whole thing was a misconception—nothing more than that; although I believe it was a technical violation of the law. The fact that the Government intended to receive back the advances made to the Maoris on that land was well known; indeed, I might have mentioned it in the House, but it was widely known. The misapprehension might have come about in this way: Mr. McDonald would perhaps say, “Do the Government intend to buy this land?” Mr. Booth would probably say in reply, “I understand not.” Then, supposing that the Government did not intend to buy, he might have thought that the Government acquiesced in the company getting the land. McDonald, I think, asked Booth to assist him in getting the land, and Booth declined. Booth was a licensed Interpreter, and would have to witness the Maori signatures. As Booth witnessed some of the signatures McDonald might have thought that the Government had acquiesced. However, I came to the conclusion afterwards that the whole thing was a misconception.

89. *Hon. Mr. Ballance.*] Did the company apply to lift the Proclamation for any of these blocks of land?—When I came to Wellington I had a strong impression that they made repeated applications for that purpose; but I apprehend such applications must have been verbal, for I have not been able to find any letters—or I may not have got the complete piles of papers.

90. If they applied to you to lift the Proclamation, would you not consider that as relieving you from the obligation to purchase?—Yes.

91. If you intended to go on with the purchase you would refuse to take off the Proclamation?—Yes.

92. Did you understand that the company were desirous of purchasing large blocks of land?—I understood they desired to purchase large blocks of land—that is, a very considerable quantity.

93. Well, if they had gone in to purchase land themselves, would not that have prevented the Government from acquiring land, by raising largely the price?—I have no doubt about that.

94. The negotiations of the company would have the effect of raising the price?—Yes.

95. You would not have felt yourself justified to go in and compete with the company for the land?—Not at the price they were giving.

96. Would it have been an unreasonable thing for you to compete with the company, who were purchasing lands?—I endeavoured to ignore the existence of the company altogether. I endeavoured to act as if there was no such company. I do not know whether you can understand it, or the Committee either, but I tried to divest my mind of all thought of the company, and to make my mind up as to what I would have done if there was no company, and to act accordingly.

97. In regard to the money required for this purpose, in the Appropriation Act was there any vote taken?—There was, no doubt, a vote taken that could have been applied to this purpose; but the vote was calculated on the basis of closing up the purchase transactions.

98. In arriving at the vote had you not an estimate of the purchases that it would be desirable to complete; or had you money applicable to the purchase of this land?—At one time we must have had a very large amount that might have been applied to that purpose, because we had to provide from year to year a sum of £47,000 for land which was to be but was not purchased; at the same time, after the vote had been taken, it had to be renewed: so that a large sum might have remained in hand, and could lawfully have been applied to these purchases.

99. Was it specially appropriated to acquire the land at Matatana?—We did not expect to get much land there.

100. Did you ever state to any one that you thought the company had acquired sufficient land?—Not that I am aware of. I do not remember ever saying so to any one, except on the general principle that I objected to blocks of land being sold to any syndicate.

101. *Mr. Whyte.*] Was the general effect of this hostility on the part of Kemp—I say the general effect of it—to deprive the company of what they otherwise would have got?—In all probability it would have that tendency. I should not like Mr. Whyte to make too much of that; but Kemp's hostility did have a tendency to prevent us acquiring an interest in the Horowhenua Block. I may say I apprehended that in no case would the Government have acquired the whole of that block, for a great portion ought to have been left as a permanent reserve for the Natives for ever.

102. The word “competition” was used as “between the Government and the company.” That, I think, has been taken to mean more than you meant in using the word. It meant, if I understood you, not that you were to compete for any particular blocks, but that the operations of the company in buying other lands tended to raise the price to the Government?—What I meant was that if we were disposed to give, say 7s. 6d. an acre for a piece of land, it would have been useless for the Government to compete with the company, who were offering as much as £1 or £1 5s.