

372. What do you mean by "at that time"?—Because it was thought by many we should not remain in office many months—that we should be ousted from office at the next session. In making the arrangement it was left open to me to join him again if we went out of office—to take equal share, if I chose.

372A. Was that arrangement made for the Tamaki Timber Company?—It was made for Smith and myself. He and I comprised the Tamaki Timber Company.

373. Did not Mr. Irvine then comprise part of the company?—I think he was then dropping out of it. I do not know. I did not manage the business. It was about that time. He was in difficulties, at all events.

374. What was the object of the arrangement that Smith should go on purchasing?—To protect myself. Because of the one and a half share I had already acquired.

375. How would that protect the share and a half?—If Smith acquired the rest, I should have had no further trouble. If a stranger did, I might have lost all. There was no other reason.

376. Did you not say that, though it might not be legally wrong, persons might object?—I say my sole reason in allowing Mr. Smith to use my credit was to protect my share and a half. This was the sole reason for signing the mortgage of 14th June, 1892.

376A. When title was completed did you get your share and a half?—I should be surprised if not. The share and a half are mine, and not in partnership. The half-share was paid for by partnership money: the full share paid for by my money, at my special request.

377. Who made the contract?—

378. *Through Mr. Sainsbury*: Mr. Smith did all the transaction.

379. The cheque of the company paid for it?—I presume so. I did not see it. I still say the share and a half was mine, not partnership property; mine solely. Both paid for by partnership money—moneys out of the partnership account. All Smith's are private property paid for out of partnership account. It is open for me to go into the matter whenever I choose. I never made any statement to any of my colleagues about this arrangement with Smith. After the receipt of the memo. of the 10th March I saw Mr. Ballance.

380. Did not Mr. Ballance ask you if you had been engaged in acquiring this block?—No; he did not ask, but I made an explanation to him. No other Minister was present. I simply told him I had nothing to do with purchase of Native lands since I was a Minister.

381. That has been the understanding between you and your colleagues all along?—There has never been any understanding between us. Mr. Ballance accepted my answer. He asked very little about the matter at all [Rose's appointment]. I have not the letter of Mr. Smith; he mentioned this matter amongst others. I remember Mr. Crombie coming to my room. I remember reading the passage to him. Mr. Crombie came about the valuation. I would naturally give effect to any recommendation of Mr. Smith on his district matters generally.

382. Did not you and Mr. Smith make an arrangement with bank manager?—I did not; I left it all to Mr. Smith.

383. Do you think it a proper thing in a Native Minister giving his credit to another for the purpose of buying Native land?—I see nothing improper in it.

384. Then why did you not do it openly: why did you not purchase it yourself?—It was not advisable. Nothing improper. It might lead to a supposition that I was using my influence. If the fact of the Native Minister being concealed, I do not see how it could arise. Native Ministers cannot proclaim any land of Natives to be taken. Government has to acquire an interest in land first. I made no effort on the part of Government to acquire Umutaoroa. I would not have thought of such a thing.

385. Do you consider it to be the duty of the Native Minister to guard Native interests?—Yes, as a rule; not altogether.

386. If there were Natives who ought to be interested, but were not legally so, would it not be his duty to see their interests attended to?—I say, if title was in such a position that people were really beneficially interested, it would be duty of Native Minister to assist them. I was not aware that many Natives were claiming to be beneficially interested in Umutaoroa Block. I know that one or two were claiming. I was aware of one application that was being opposed by our solicitor. I suppose that instructions would be given to our solicitor to oppose. If it was a case requiring legislation I should require to consider it. The case of Umutaoroa never came before me.

387. Are you not aware that there are hundreds of cases of greater hardship than Tahoraite?—There may be many, not hundreds; very few have come before me.

387A. Can you say how it was so much attention was paid to the Tahoraite case?—There was not: I treated it the same as others. I attempted to clear off all long-standing grievances. There were many other complicated matters. I have looked through the correspondence.

388. Do you not see that Smith has been acting for Natives in the subdivisions?—Once in 1893; once in 18th August, 1892; from Smith I have seen the correspondence. I remember the Bill passing through. If same efforts taken to pass the Validation of Titles Bill as in Tahoraite Bill, I do not think the Validation Bill would have been passed. The Validation Bill was not made a party question. I did not treat the Tahoraite Bill as a party question.

389. Did not the whole of the Government party vote for the Tahoraite Bill?—I do not know.

390. Had you any conversation with any other member of the Cabinet about the memorandum? I had no general talk with any Minister. As soon as the letter was sent to the Prime Minister I was advised it was privileged. I then began to get information. After you published your letter I had very little to say to any one. I saw that an inquiry was asked for. I wrote also to Mr. Ballance assenting to retire while this matter was going on. The Bill I introduced was a consolidation Bill; it consolidated ten or eleven named Bills.

391. Has not the operation of these laws led to all sorts of opposition and confusion?—My opinion is that it is one law overriding another; it was to remedy that that I introduced it. I do