

WALTER HARRY BOWLER sworn and examined. (No. 6.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What are you, Mr. Bowler?—President of the Waikato-Maniapoto Maori Land Board.

2. *Mr. Massey.*] Is it not a fact, Mr. Bowler, that you have been present while the other witnesses have been examined?—No, that is quite incorrect.

3. Or some of them?—None of them. I have not been in this room before.

4. *The Chairman.*] Do you wish to make a statement?—I do not think I have any statement to make.

5. *Mr. Massey.*] You have just stated you are President of the Waikato-Maniapoto Maori Land Board: how long have you acted in that capacity?—For sixteen months.

6. Had you any experience in Native matters prior to your appointment?—I have been connected with the Department for over seventeen years.

7. You have been in the employ of the Native Department?—Yes.

8. Who are the other members of the Board?—Mr. Seymour, and a Native named Mare Teretiu.

9. Mr. Seymour is a European?—Yes.

10. You convened, or had something to do with convening, a meeting of the assembled owners of what is known as the Mokau Block?—Yes.

11. Who requested you to convene the meeting?—An application was made to the Board.

12. By whom?—By Mr. Dalziel, acting on behalf of Mr. Lewis.

13. *Mr. Herries.*] Could you give us the dates as you go on? When was the application received?—The application was received by me on the 24th December, 1910. It was forwarded through the Under-Secretary by a memorandum dated the 20th December.

14. *Mr. Massey.*] I must ask that that document be put in?—Very well; I will put it in.

15. Who is the Under-Secretary?—Mr. Fisher.

16. You were requested, then, to convene a meeting?—Yes.

17. And you went through the necessary forms to have the meeting convened?—Yes. I may say that the meeting was directed to be held by the Minister, and it was duly called.

18. You received your instructions from the Minister to convene the meeting?—Yes.

19. Have you got that in writing?—Yes.

20. Would you mind putting that in?—Very well.

21. Then, how did you go about convening the meeting?—In the usual way. The usual notice was given in the *Gazette*.

22. Anything else?—And the Natives were notified by circular.

23. Each Native?—Each Native, as far as we could find them.

24. How many Natives were notified?—That I could not say. The notice was distributed through the solicitors and agents to the Natives, as far as we could find them; but the Natives were well aware of the proceedings, as is evidenced by the attendance at the meeting.

25. How many circulars were sent out?—I could not say.

26. Can you give us any information on this point?—No, I should not like to say. We notified them as well as we could. The notice appeared in the *Kahiti* and the *Gazette*.

27. You do not want the Committee to understand that every single Native, in whatever part of the country he may live, sees the *Gazette*?—No.

28. You know there are two hundred Native owners in these blocks?—No, I do not.

29. Are you able to tell the Committee how many Native owners there are?—Yes.

30. How many?—One hundred and eight.

31. Are you quite sure of that?—Positive.

32. Do you know that we have had information from the Native Minister to the effect that there are two hundred owners in these blocks?

*Hon. Sir J. Carroll:* No. I remarked that there were approximately two hundred owners. I was not saying positively that that was the number.

33. *Mr. Massey.*] You have heard the Native Minister himself state that he expressed the opinion that there were approximately two hundred owners in the blocks?—I have already stated there were 108.

34. You do not know how many circulars you sent out?—No.

35. You do not know whether all those Natives received circulars?—I think it probable some of them did not. It is quite reasonable to suppose they did not.

36. Can you give us the number that were present at the first meeting?—Yes. I took the names of all of them. I can put them in. There were somewhere between thirty and forty.

37. Out of 108?—Yes.

38. You cannot tell us positively how many there were—it is rather vague to say there were between thirty and forty?

*Hon. Mr. Ngata:* The babies, for instances, would not go to the meeting.

*Mr. Massey:* No, but the babies might be represented by their trustees.

*The Chairman:* May I ask that the examination go on. Anything that may come out of it can be asked afterwards.

*Witness:* It is rather difficult to tell the number of owners, because some are owners in different blocks. In one block I had twenty-seven owners, in another six, in another thirteen, and in another eight. There would not be that many individuals.

39. *Mr. Massey.*] Do you know the number of owners in each block?—I could not tell you offhand. There were a number of owners, and the title was continually changing by succession. One man would come in by succession who perhaps had been in the title before, or perhaps he would not have been. It is therefore difficult to say without working it out.

40. Is it possible to work it out?—Yes.