

16. The meeting was adjourned till the 22nd March?—Yes. In the meantime we were to have a meeting of the owners at Mahoenui. During the day the matter was discussed by everybody, and in the evening there was a meeting held at Cole's boardinghouse in Te Kuiti, at which every Native was present that we could get hold of. The town was full of the Mokau Natives, and practically all those who controlled shares were there. The largest shareholders were all present.

17. How many were present?—Perhaps about twenty. The room was full, and people were outside looking in at the window. Every one in the town knew about it.

18. That is to say, twenty Maoris were present out of 108 owners?—Of course, there were a lot of people who were not directly interested, and had not a voice. In a case of this kind, out of 108 owners there might be only ten who really represented the whole lot. As a matter of fact, one person, Aterea, was a very large owner himself, because he and his brother and sisters were successors to a great many of the Natives who had died. So he represented a very large interest; and Paeroroku controlled nine shares. In their deliberations I took no part, because they were not conducted in English. The only part I took was to state the efforts I had made towards carrying on this work and the difficulties that had presented themselves to me. I also pointed out that if we proceeded any further, and served the writs, we might be held responsible for any expenses incurred by the other side; and I for one did not care to assume that responsibility. After thoroughly discussing the pros and cons, the Natives themselves decided that they would have to sell or do something; they could not go on any longer. Finally they referred to me, and asked if I had any suggestion to make. I said, "Well, a crisis has come, and desperate measures require desperate treatment. I should like to mention now a matter which I have carefully kept from everybody for quite a month." I then told them that about a month before Mr. David White, of Hastings, an old friend of mine, with whom I had been doing business for some months before, had called upon me. This would be about the middle or early in February, Mr. White had then put before me a paper dealing with a proposition on the part of several persons at Hastings and Napier to acquire the coal-mine on the Mangapapa Block, which is on the north side of the Mokau River.

19. Is that on the Mokau Block?—No, it is quite a separate piece of land.

20. *Mr. Dalziel.*] That was a meeting of Natives only, was it not?—Yes. Mr. Dalziel knew nothing about this meeting. In fact, he did not appear at all in the matter as far as I was concerned. I did not know Mr. Dalziel.

21. *Mr. Massey.*] You were on opposite sides?—Yes, all the way through. I was very much up against him.

22. Up to a certain point?—Yes; I will come to that point. There is a time when resistance is sometimes futile. Well, Mr. White put a paper before me, and explained that a company was being formed, in which he was the prime mover, I understand, to take over the Mokau Coal Company, and if things should turn out all right, to take over the Mokau-Mohakatino blocks, either by securing the leases or, if possible, getting the freehold.

23. Do you remember the date of the interview between yourself and Mr. White?—Yes, it was about the middle or the beginning of February. It was much antecedent to the meeting with the Natives at the boardinghouse.

24. Was that meeting between yourself and Mr. White prior to the first meeting of assembled owners?—I could not say. It was about the beginning of February.

25. It was certainly before the second meeting of assembled owners?—Yes, it was certainly before the 10th March. I saw the papers which Mr. White had, and the names of those people who were subscribing. Mr. White asked me if I would also become a shareholder: would I put my name down for 400 shares.

26. Were they £1 shares?—They were £10 shares. I said, "No, you have come to the wrong shop. I will have nothing to do with your company. If I have any money to spare I will put it into sheep and cattle, when I can be sure of a good dividend; but no more companies for me." That is all that transpired with Mr. White. Coming back to the meeting of the Natives, I said to them that I had some information which I thought at that stage they ought to know, and that was that I understood a company was being formed for the purpose of taking over the Mokau-Mohakatino Block, and that the capital proposed was £100,000.

27. *Hon. Sir J. Carroll.*] What date was this?—On the 11th March, when I told them. In order to appease the sentimental objections of those Natives who did not wish to sell, I said that if they could get some shares in the company they would still retain an interest in the land for their lives. Somebody said, "How many shares should we ask for?" After a little thought I said, "Well, let us have 10 per cent. of the £25,000." That represented £2,500 in shares. They had a long consultation about that, and said they thought it would do very well.

28. You were talking then to the Natives belonging to your side?—No; all who were there, sellers and non-sellers. But most of those in the room were our own people—in fact, all of the committee were except Tauhia te Wiata; but he sent his brother, Tarake te Wiata, who, with Paeroroku, represented the Otaki Natives, and Aterea represented the Natives of Mokau and districts above there.

29. *Mr. Massey.*] Well?—In the end we got the shares.

30. How did you get them?—I understood from Mr. White that the company's headquarters were at Palmerston.

31. Was Mr. White in Te Kuiti at the time of the meeting?—No, he had gone weeks before.

32. Did you have a talk with Mr. Dalziel before going to Palmerston. No, not a word. I kept Mr. Dalziel at arm's length. I did not need to, because he was honest enough not to come near me. I have no fault to find with their part of the business in any way whatever. I was never approached in any way by them. What I did was entirely on my own responsibility. I went to Palmerston and called upon Mr. Loughnan.