

189. It could not be suggested in any way that the Natives you represented and for whom you were working had come to some understanding among themselves to throw Mr. Bell over?—Absolutely no, not in any way. In fact, every assistance was given to Mr. Bell to be present. I was very much grieved when he did not come.

190. It was not a move to dispense with Mr. Bell's services, so that the Natives could take up the case and carry it on themselves?—Not at all. They did not want to get rid of Mr. Bell, nor did we. I am sure I did not, and I can certainly speak for Tuiti Macdonald.

191. The Natives would have been pleased if he had been there all through, as the other parties to the transaction were represented by counsel?—Yes: I would have been far better satisfied.

192. *Hon. Mr. Ngata.*] Did you have any communication with any member of the Government during the whole of these negotiations?—I do not know any member of the Government. I have only seen Sir James Carroll twice, and the other members of the Government I do not know.

193. I mean, in connection with this particular matter?—I never had a word with them, or their representative.

194. With regard to the Maori Land Board, do you know the three members composing the Board for the district?—I know Mr. Bowler, Mr. Seymour, and the Maori member.

195. Did you have any communication with them or any interview with them in connection with this matter?—None whatever, in any shape or form.

196. I mean, during the whole of the negotiations?—No.

197. The part that you took in the proceedings, I think, may be divided into two—first, as regards the action contemplated in the Supreme Court, and secondly, as regards the sale to Mr. Lewis?—Yes.

198. Can you tell the Committee at about what period the people whom you and Mr. Macdonald represented ceased to take further interest in the action in the Supreme Court?—I know exactly when it started—that is, when Mr. Dalziel threatened to withdraw the offer, and the meeting took place immediately afterwards. That was on the 11th March, at Cole's boardinghouse.

199. Would I be right in saying that you were chief organizer for your party?—I was a sort of focus. They touched the button all round, and I did the rest as far as lay in my power. But I could not say much to the Natives, because I do not speak Maori, and I had to call in the assistance of either Damon or Macdonald.

200. Was the committee that was formed in Wellington here on Mr. Bell's suggestion in December?—The committee was formed at Mokau.

201. Was that before or after you saw Mr. Bell?—After.

202. It is not true, then, that a committee was formed in Wellington?—No. They may have had a committee before, unknown to me. All I know is that I met them at Wellington.

203. But you say that a committee was formed at Mokau?—Yes.

204. Do you know the *personnel* of the committee?—Yes.

205. Was Aterea one?—Yes.

206. Paeroroku?—Yes.

207. Tauhia Te Wiata?—Yes.

208. And Tarake te Wiata?—I do not think Tarake was one. He was not one.

209. Were there any others?—Yes: I think Wateni Paneta was one.

210. You seem to have divided your forces up after you returned from Wellington?—They became divided. I did not divide them.

211. But you were financing most of these people?—I had either to pay or let the thing drop. They were absolutely destitute, as far as I could see.

212. What was the committee concerned with chiefly during January?—Putting into effect the work that had been laid out by Mr. Bell.

213. What was that?—Getting signatures to the various writs that had been issued.

214. You mean the authorities to Mr. Bell's firm to sue?—Yes. I did what I could in that connection.

215. Do you remember who were employed in that work?—Yes, Damon.

216. In what capacity?—He was getting signatures and translating.

217. As interpreter?—Yes. He got the signatures and witnessed them. No ordinary witness was competent to do that.

218. Do you know how the owners of the Mokau lands whom your committee represent are distributed?—Yes; I know pretty well where they all are.

219. Will you tell the Committee, roughly?—Aterea represented a very large interest at Mahoenui.

220. There were some living at Mokau?—Two or three very old people—Te Ianui and Taiaroa, Te Oro, and one or two more whose names I do not remember, were living at Mokau.

221. Did any live at New Plymouth or in the vicinity?—There was one woman at New Plymouth. There were several at Otaki, Paeroroku, and Tauhia te Wiata, and Tarake te Wiata, and several at Taringamutu.

222. To obtain the signatures to the warrant to sue, I presume, Mr. Damon had to visit all these places?—I do not know that he visited them all. I think he stayed at New Plymouth. I sent the documents down to Paeroroku enclosing a letter to Tauhia te Wiata to see that certain documents were handed over to Damon. They had charge of the documents to hand over to Mr. Damon, but instead of handing them over they kept them for fourteen days.

223. Was any one else employed to obtain the signatures to these warrants?—No, but in order that the matter might be made as widely known as possible, one or two persons, notably Maraku and Patupatu, and Tohiriri, went about discussing matters amongst the Natives, and they brought persons into my office when the documents were there to sign, and their expenses were paid.