

253. Were you present at the first meeting on the 6th January at Te Kuiti?—When Mr. Skerrett was there?

254. Yes?—No, I was not.

255. Were you acting at all for the Natives?—Only in a subordinate way. I knew that Toheriri, the man for whom I had put in an application for partition, opposed the sale—in fact, he was the only man who really did openly and actively oppose the sale. At least, so I was told by him and others.

256. What amount of travelling had you to do in connection with this case?—I have been travelling and attending to the business ever since November, 1910. I have been all over the country. I have entertained the Natives at Te Kuiti. When there was no place for them to stay at I had to find accommodation for them, and act as a sort of general father.

257. And financier?—Yes.

258. You say it was about the beginning of March that your party ceased to take further interest in the Supreme Court action: is that correct?—It was on the 11th when they definitely said they could not go on any further. The meeting was on the 10th, and it was on the evening of Saturday, the 11th, that the matter was finally discussed, and they came to the conclusion that they could not possibly proceed any further.

259. Were you present at the meeting of assembled owners on the 11th?—I was late.

260. You did not hear what took place?—In a general way I did.

261. Did you hear Tuiti Macdonald apply to the Board for an adjournment?—Yes, I think I heard that.

262. When was the proposal made about demanding shares in the company, in addition to the cash consideration?—On the 11th. That was when the crisis had come.

263. Was this after the meeting?—Yes.

264. After the adjournment?—Yes.

265. You say that the Natives directed you to go to Palmerston?—Yes. I was the only one who knew anything about it. I mentioned the matter to the Natives, and they said, "You go and try to arrange what you have suggested."

266. Was any inducement held out to you personally to exercise influence?—Absolutely none, in any shape or form.

267. You visited Palmerston on the 18th, according to this account?—That is the day I left there. I went there on the 16th, and on the 17th the decision was come to, when I telegraphed. I returned on the 18th. That was a Saturday; I got home that night, and on Sunday morning went to Mahoenui to explain to the Natives.

268. Which way did you go back?—By the Main Trunk Railway.

269. Finally, a meeting of all your people was held at Mahoenui?—Yes, and the telephone was there right up to Mokau.

270. Were all the principal owners present at Mahoenui?—A number were there. We sent over to Aria and Totoro for all those who were about there; but it was not a general meeting.

271. The purpose of that meeting at Mahoenui was to consider—what?—The proposals.

272. The additional proposal, or in conjunction with the £25,000?—In conjunction with the £25,000. The biggest meeting was held on the 22nd March at Te Kuiti, when everybody was present.

273. I am speaking of the preliminaries?—They were all there at Te Kuiti then.

274. The suggestion is that there was a sinister influence at work prior to the 22nd March to make your people turn completely round and practically surrender to these proposals on the 22nd at the meeting of assembled owners?—That is not so. The arrangement was not confirmed until the 22nd, when they were all at Te Kuiti.

275. But you had a meeting at Mahoenui?—Yes.

276. Was any representative of the company present at that meeting?—None whatever.

277. Were Pepene's party represented there?—No.

278. It was simply a meeting of your own side?—Yes. I had no conversation with any one on the other side. As for Andrew Eketone, I never had any talk with him at all. I never discussed matters with the other side at all.

279. Not at that particular meeting?—Nor at any other meeting.

280. Was any opposition shown at the Mahoenui meeting to the proposal to sell the Mokau blocks?—No. I never heard any opposition from any quarter except those old people at Mokau, who would not do anything. I was there from the 19th to the 21st, and I stood in the telegraph-office and had the telephone all day long, and Aterea was there all the time, at Mokau at the telephone.

281. He was not at Mahoenui?—He had gone on to Mokau, and Damon ought to have been there too. Anyhow, Aterea was there to represent the committee. He spoke English very well, and I telegraphed and spoke to him on the telephone practically all day, and got him to lay the whole of the proposals, which he thoroughly understood, before the Natives. He kept on there till it was late at night, and again on the following morning. But they could get nothing out of those few old people, who never intended to sell or even lease their land. It was hopeless to discuss matters with them, because in any case they formed a minority.

282. *The Chairman.*] Is not that generally the view of the old people?—Yes, they would not sign their names. I think some of them had conscientious scruples against even signing the writ.

283. *Hon. Mr. Ngata.*] Are those the people known as Te Whiti-ites and Tohu-ites?—The Tohu-ites, I believe, would not do anything.

284. It is their religion not to sign any document?—Whatever might have been left undone at Mahoenui and Mokau, over which I had no control, was completed to my satisfaction when all the Natives met at Te Kuiti on the 22nd, and had ample time to discuss the whole matter.

285. Was any resolution put at the meeting at Mahoenui?—No. There were not enough people there. I had to send on all my talk to Mokau and leave Aterea—who was a man in very