

215. Then do you accept Tuiti Macdonald's statement?—I do not require it. I made that out myself. I got from the Natives the total area of land held by those people on our side and on Pepene's side, and I will tell you how I arrived at my conclusion. Here is the statement in this book, showing the different blocks. On our side the total came to 35,489 acres, and on Pepene's side 13,380. Now, the whole area is 48,870 acres.

216. I am not asking you about area: I am asking about the number of owners?—I have nothing to do with the number of owners.

217. What I asked you was whether you are prepared to accept Tuiti Macdonald's statement as correct, that 75 per cent. of the owners were opposed to the sale?—He did not say that. I knew what he meant.

218. *The Chairman.*] Will you just answer the questions, please—Yes or No?—Mr. Massey will not understand that the 77 per cent. refers to shareholding.

219. *Mr. Massey.*] I am asking you whether you agree with this statement of Tuiti Macdonald's: "Before the resolution was put I was quite confident I would defeat it, because I had quite 77 per cent. of the owners with me"?—The President of the Board knew what that referred to.

220. Do you agree with that statement?—Not if it means 77 per cent. of the owners, but if it means share interest represented by those owners, certainly. The only thing that comes before the President of the Board and that he can consider at all is the shareholding of the different people. If you look at the Act you will find that shareholding counts: owners numerically do not count at all.

221. We understand that You will admit that 75 per cent. of the share-owners were opposed to the sale?—Yes.

222. About those telegrams: There was a telegram from Mr. Macdonald to yourself dated the 7th March: "Bell not required. Will arrive Thursday morning." You remember that telegram?—Yes.

223. Do you remember the date?—It was on the telegram, which I handed in.

224. Then do you remember this telegram from Mr. Bell to you: "Thanks for telegram about rooms, but await your reply whether you consent my not going. Much prefer stay in Wellington." That was the 8th March?—Yes.

225. So that the expression of opinion from Mr. Bell that he would much prefer to stay in Wellington had nothing to do with the decision of Mr. Macdonald or yourself not to have him appear for the Natives at Te Kuiti on the occasion of the meeting?—That is rather complicated.

226. The point is this: on the 7th March Macdonald wired to you that Mr. Bell was not required?—It may be the 7th. I may not have got it till the 8th. It depends on whether the messages arrived at Te Kuiti by 5 o'clock. After 5 o'clock we may not get them.

227. What I want you to say is whether, before Mr. Bell's telegram reached you in which he stated that he preferred to stay in Wellington, you and Tuiti Macdonald had stated that it would not be necessary for him to come to Te Kuiti?—I do not know. Judge that from the telegrams. I sent them practically simultaneously.

228. They were both telegrams that you received, but one is dated the 7th and the other the 8th. One is from Mr. Macdonald and the other from Mr. Bell?—Yes.

229. Macdonald on the 7th says it is not necessary for Mr. Bell to come: is that not so?—Possibly, yes.

230. On the 8th you received a telegram from Mr. Bell to the effect that he would prefer to stay in Wellington. Is that not so?—I have not the telegrams before me, and am not drawing any conclusions from them.

231. But I am drawing conclusions from them. I want you to answer this question: You had practically made up your mind, according to these dates, before the receipt of Mr. Bell's telegram, that he would not be required at Te Kuiti?—No; I gave him plenty of time to say whether he would come or not.

232. Then Macdonald, according to this telegram, had made up his mind that Mr. Bell would not be required?—I do not know. I am not considering the facts at all: I simply place them before you. Macdonald's telegram may have been delayed in some way. You must judge from the telegrams. There are the dates on them. I did not make any comment on them.

233. You are not able to offer an explanation?—No, I do not offer an explanation.

234. You tell us that you know all about these blocks?—Not *all* about them.

235. Will you tell us how many acres the company control on the southern side?—No.

236. You know they do control a block on the southern side?—I do not know anything about it.

237. You are on your oath. Did you not give evidence with regard to the coal-mine and the land on the other side of the river, and state that the coal-mine is situated on the southern side?—It is situated on the northern block—the Mangapapa Block.

238. On the Auckland side?—Yes.

239. That is the block of which I am speaking: do you know how many acres there are in that block?—About 12,000. There is a smaller area of 1,500 acres covering the coal-mine.

240. In addition? That is about 14,000 acres?—Yes.

241. And the company control that block?—I do not know what they control.

242. *The Chairman.*] Can you not answer by saying you do not know what the company are going to do?—Mr. Massey is not content with that.

243. *Mr. Massey.*] If you will simply say Yes or No to my questions I shall be satisfied. I want to get from you whether you knew the area of land which the company controlled on the side of the river on which the coal-mine is situated?—

*The Chairman:* It is altogether an irrelevant question. The witness is not supposed to know what the company is going to do.