

the Uhiroa and Puhata blocks, eighteen signatures to which have yet to be obtained, and the Waimamaku block, the interests of two dissentients in which have yet to be defined. These, however, may be said to be as good as finished.

With regard to the Uhiroa and Puhata blocks, fifty-nine out of seventy-seven have signed, the others being absent. I advised Mr. Brissenden to pay those present one-half of the balance of the purchase money, reserving the other half for the signatures of the other eighteen. The balance in hand is far more than the share of those absent, but we thought it advisable to keep as much as possible, so as to make it the interest of those who have signed to assemble the absentees. We have arranged to meet the owners at Mongonui, on the 21st July, where they undertake to have the absentees present. I do not believe that every one will be present on the day named, and I would respectfully request to be informed whether, in the event of any being absent, I should take a Resident Magistrate or Judge of the Court with me to obtain their signatures. Those whom I expect to be absent are two old men who live at Muriwhenua, North Cape, and are too feeble to come to Mongonui. My reason for again alluding to this matter is, that I am not certain whether in Mr. Clarke's reply to my telegram it is intended that I should get the signatures of the absentees in the presence of a Judge or not. The telegram says, "Get their signatures from time to time as you are able." Section 60 of the Act is very explicit on the point that the Judge (not Resident Magistrate) must explain to each individual, and I should not feel justified in acting contrary to it without definite instructions, as the question of title may be affected thereby. I leave here for Mongonui on the 19th instant, so there will be time to let me have instructions before then.

I have not sent in a return of any purchases, as they are all included in Mr. Brissenden's return, he having paid the purchase moneys; but I have been assisting him in all the blocks, as well as those particularly mentioned in my instructions.

With regard to the purchases generally, I feel that I would not be doing right, after all that has been said in the Provincial Council and elsewhere in reference to these Northern transactions, did I not state what from my own observation I find to be the facts. I may say I entered on the task of assisting in the completion of these matters fully expecting to meet with considerable difficulty and dissatisfaction among the Natives. However, I am pleased to be able to say that I never yet concluded the negotiations for the purchase of any lands with more satisfaction than I have felt in the closing of these purchases, or with less difficulty; and it is the more remarkable inasmuch as the lands were not in one block, but in some fifty, comprising altogether about 300,000 acres, owned by different sets of Natives. In the whole of these blocks of land which have passed and are completed, there was not a single instance where the Natives failed to carry out the original agreement as to price, or where they attempted to repudiate the various deposits paid on the lands. To my mind there can be no better proof than this fact of the straightforwardness of these purchases; and moreover, there was in the whole of these transactions but one instance where the Court did not confirm the title of the persons to whom the deposits had been paid, and in that case (the Omahuta block), although the Native, Wi Tana Papahia, to whom a portion of the money had been paid, failed to satisfy the Court of his claim, yet from all I have heard the land would never have been allowed to have been surveyed had he not got the deposit which he did. The successful claimants in the Court were the Natives to whom the other portion of the deposit had been paid, and after defeating Wi Tana in Court they shared the balance of the purchase money with him, or rather gave him a portion of it.

In reference to the other statement that the Natives had been paid in orders on storekeepers and publicans, it is entirely without foundation, for the Natives in each case admitted, without any hesitation, to having received in cash the various deposits, as they were called to their recollection. There is no doubt that the Natives have in several of the blocks considerably curtailed the extent from what was originally intended, and that in some cases they have been very dishonest among themselves in the division of the money, and that there may be dissatisfaction among some few individuals as to the share of the money; but that is a matter it is impossible for any one to remedy but themselves. The only course we could adopt was, to pay the money before all the parties, and let them decide who should take it, and thereby leave the responsibility of the division with them, for, as the interests are not equal, the agent could not take upon himself to make a division.

With regard to Waipoua and Maunganui, I may say these matters are as good as settled, and only await the sitting of the Court to conclude them. I have seen both parties, and have arranged with them to have a Court held early in August. Parore at first wished to delay the matter until the summer, but I persuaded him to agree, as it could cause no inconvenience to him, the Court being held near to his own place, and the other parties are desirous of getting the matter settled; besides which, I think it desirable in every way that it should be closed as soon as practicable.

In order to obviate the inconvenience of having a sitting of the Court in the wet weather, I have arranged to have the Court held at a place where there will be ample house accommodation for as many Natives as will be there. It will be necessary to supply the Natives with some provisions, as the Court will be held away from the kainga, and they have lost a large quantity of food with the recent floods. The cost of this will not be great, as the Court will not last much more than a week.

With reference to the supplies given to the Natives at Hokianga, Mr. Brissenden paid the accounts, and I have certified them.