

11. Who was the negotiating purchaser?—Dr. Featherston, with myself to assist him. I was the trusted agent of Dr. Featherston to negotiate with the Natives. My position was quite subordinate, and Dr. Featherston never relinquished the absolute control.

12. The owners of that block were divided into two lots, the sellers and non-sellers?—They were; and here I may explain that there was an increasing irritation owing to disputes between the Natives, which might have ended in hostilities. Dr. Featherston was Superintendent at that time, and for the sake of peace and quietness and getting out of the difficulty, he proposed to buy up the whole of the land in dispute. My instructions were to get as many signatures as I could of Maoris who professed any claim, whatever their title might be; and I obtained 1,700 signatures myself. The three hapus represented by the petitioner did not sign the deed. The payment of money did not get rid of the difficulty, and it was deemed expedient to refer the whole question to the Native Land Court.

13. Were you at this time acquainted with Mr. Alexander McDonald?—Yes, I had some knowledge of him, like most persons in the district. He was an advocate for a section of the non-sellers, but at that time held no official position, having been dismissed from his office of Sheep Inspector by Dr. Featherston.

14. Was he intimately acquainted with the Maoris of the district?—Yes, especially with those with whom he had cast his lot. At that time he did not know a great deal of the Maori language, though he speaks it well enough now.

15. But he was very intimately acquainted with the Maoris in that district?—Yes; he was managing their business for them, and assisted them when we were fighting over the question of title. He must have had a pretty general knowledge of the whole question. I may state that when the title of these three hapus was under investigation in the Native Land Court at Otaki, Mr. T. C. Williams was acting for the non-sellers and McDonald never put in an appearance at all. Sir William Fox was acting on behalf of the Ngatiapa and as counsel for the Crown.

16. You have said that Mr. McDonald had a good knowledge of affairs: could you tell us if he knew what was going on between the non-sellers, Dr. Featherston, and the Government?—I think he had anything but a complete knowledge, for this reason: that Dr. Featherston was anxious that we should hold no communication with him. All through the affair he was looked upon as the "white chief" of the Ngatikauwhata (non-sellers), and as hostile to us. I suppose, however, from his position he had a good knowledge of the business of the Native tribes generally.

17. Then are we to understand that you refused to hold converse with him?—Mr. McDonald was at the head of a section of the non-sellers. What I wish to impress on the minds of the Committee is, that I was not on any terms of confidence with him concerning this matter. Since then, however, things have changed, and I have acted in concert with him in certain Native matters. For example, we have been acting together and on terms of perfect confidence over the Wellington and Manawatu Railway business.

18. Were you not trying to get the signatures of the non-sellers?—Yes; and I succeeded, in the teeth of Alexander McDonald, in obtaining the signatures of many, including the Natikauwhata chief, Tapa Te Whata.

19. And afterwards money was paid to the non-sellers in respect to rent?—Yes; but I must explain that I had discharged the duty for which I had been specially detached, and had returned to the Resident Magistracy at Wanganui. From that time I had nothing whatever to do with either the rent-money or its distribution, except, perhaps, sending occasional reports or memoranda. I had no knowledge of the money having been paid to McDonald at the time.

20. Then, first of all, McDonald was the trusted representative of one section, was acquainted with the negotiations of the other section, and was also employed by the Government?—I guarded myself against saying that he was employed by the Government.

21. Did you recommend that Mr. McDonald should be employed in the distribution of the money?—No; I have certainly no recollection of anything of the kind.

22. What about these rates for impoundage?—Dr. Featherston saw there was very little chance of getting the land into his own hands so long as the Natives were getting money from large runholders, and he agreed to pay them 10 per cent. per annum on the arrears, instead of taking proceedings in Court for putting an end to the illegal occupation. As his agent, I told them that, no matter how long the rents were impounded, they would in the end receive them, with 10 per cent. added by way of interest.

23. Do I understand you to say that the Maoris consented to Dr. Featherston receiving the rents instead of them?—The rents were obtained when and how we could get them. There was no actual demand made till the purchase-money had been paid.

24. Is the Committee to understand that the Maoris consented to this warning being given before it really was given?—The position was this: The Ngatiapa were determined that the rents should be paid to them; so, on the other hand, were the Ngatiraukawa.

25. You have explained that a warning was given, and that after that if they refused to pay the law would be put in force?—Yes.

26. Did the Maori owners, or any number of them, consent to this warning being given before it was given?—I do not know. The Ngatiapa were claiming the whole of the rents from the runholders. The Ngatiraukawa said they were entitled to the whole of the rents; and it was through this dispute between the tribes that the matter culminated. Dr. Featherston met the tribes and warned the runholders to pay nothing more till this question was disposed of. It is very certain, had not such an arrangement been made, one tribe or the other would have driven off the stock.

27. I presume it would be safe to assume that a warning was given?—A warning was given with the knowledge of the Natives and with their tacit acquiescence. When it became known that