

proceedings we have encountered many obstacles, some of which we are of opinion need not have been raised, but the result of which has been to cause a delay which would not otherwise have occurred. On the receipt of our Commission, on the 3rd March, 1879, we held a sitting in Wellington on the 13th of that month. Mr. Izard appeared as counsel for the Natives interested, and represented that an adjournment for some weeks would be necessary before opening the inquiry, giving reasons, in which the Commissioners fully concurred. A formal application was accordingly made by him on behalf of his clients (Mr. Taiaroa being present and assenting) for such an adjournment; and it was finally arranged that the Commission should sit at Christchurch on the 28th April. On the day fixed the Commission sat at Christchurch, and, on the application of the counsel for the Natives, adjourned to Kaiapoi.

In opening the inquiry, and frequently during its progress, the Commissioners expressed their desire to consult the convenience of the Natives interested by holding their sittings at such times and in such places as would best suit them. The object which we set before ourselves from the outset was to make the inquiry complete and exhaustive, so that there might be no ground left for a future reopening of the questions at issue between the Natives and the Crown. We resolved to give to the Natives the fullest opportunity of stating their whole case in their own way, reserving only to ourselves the option of seeking such further evidence as we might consider necessary after their case had been put before us by themselves or their counsel.

The Commission sat at Kaiapoi on the 5th May, and took much important evidence from a large number of the Ngaitahu Tribe with reference to the purchase of the so-called Ngaitahu Block, also from Messrs Kemp, Mantell, and Hamilton, through whose agency, as Land Purchase Commissioners, the main portion of the Middle Island was acquired from the above original owners. During the sitting at Kaiapoi the Commissioners met with the first obstacle to their proceedings. The counsel for the Natives desired the production of the original deed of cession of the Akaroa Block, and the Commissioners applied to the Government for it, with other original deeds. The Hon. the Commissioner of Crown Lands, Mr. Stout, refused to allow these deeds to be sent out of the office. A second difficulty arose in consequence of the refusal of the Hon. the Colonial Treasurer, Mr. Ballance, to authorise imprest advances which had been applied for and were required to meet current expenses, on the ground that there had been no vote by Parliament for the purpose. For these and other reasons, not necessary to be stated here, the Commissioners found it necessary to adjourn, which they did on the formal application of Mr. Izard, counsel for the Natives, who stated that his clients were not prepared to proceed with the inquiry of the Akaroa purchase without the production of the original deed of cession. An adjournment to Wellington *pro formâ* was proposed and acceded to by the Commissioners, with a view of affording opportunity of communication with the Government with reference to those and other questions (among others, the appointment of a person to take the evidence in Maori) which had arisen in the course of our proceedings, and of coming to some understanding with regard to resuming the inquiry at a future date.

The Commission adjourned from Kaiapoi on the 21st May, to meet in Wellington on the 27th of the same month. From Wellington it was further adjourned on the 27th May, to meet again on the 11th August in Auckland, where the Commissioners considered it desirable to hold a sitting, in order to obtain the evidence of the Chief Judge of the Native Land Court, Mr. Fenton, in connection with the proceedings of that Court in dealing with the order of reference to it of the Ngaitahu deed or arrangement at its sitting in Christchurch in 1868; also to obtain further evidence from Mr. Commissioner Kemp with reference to the Ngaitahu purchase.

The Commission met in Auckland pursuant to adjournment, obtained the evidence of Messrs. Fenton and Kemp, and on the 16th day of September adjourned, to sit again in Wellington on the 28th October, hoping that arrangements might then be made for resuming their work, and holding such sittings in the Middle Island as might be necessary.

The Commission sat in Wellington on the 28th October; but, in consequence of Parliament being then in session, it was found inconvenient to arrange for proceeding at once with our inquiry in the Middle Island; and, at the request of Mr. Taiaroa, who was a member of the General Assembly, and could not leave his parliamentary duties to attend the sittings of the Commission, a further postponement was decided upon. As, however, there were maps to be prepared for the use of the Commission, and witnesses whose evidence might be taken in Wellington, the Commission continued its sitting there, and obtained important evidence from Sir George Grey, Hon. Mr. Mantell, and Mr. Alexander Mackay on the subject of our inquiry.

On the 5th November the Commission adjourned to Otaki to obtain important evidence from the chief Matene te Whiwhi, who from physical infirmity was unable to travel to Wellington.

The sitting in Wellington was resumed on the 11th November, and continued to the 6th December, when we adjourned to the 13th January, 1880, as the earliest date at which it would be possible to make arrangements for proceeding to the Middle Island for the purpose of resuming our inquiry by the examination of resident Native witnesses.

On the 13th January, accordingly, the Commissioners again sat in Wellington, and proceeded to make arrangements for holding sittings in the Middle Island. The 2nd February was fixed for a sitting at Akaroa, to take evidence in reference to the purchase of the Akaroa Block by Mr. Hamilton in 1866. That date was fixed as the earliest which would allow time for giving the necessary notices. In the interval the Hon. Mr. Mantell was recalled, and gave further evidence before the Commission in Wellington.

On the 20th January we received a letter from the Hon. the Native Minister, Mr. Bryce, requesting to be informed of the progress made by the Commission. A copy of the letter and our reply thereto we beg to enclose for your Excellency's information.

On the 26th January Mr. Bell, of the firm of Izard and Bell, waited on the Commission and stated that in consequence of severe illness Mr. Izard, the counsel for the Natives, would be unable to attend the sitting notified to be held at Akaroa on the 2nd February, and requested us to postpone the Akaroa case. After communication with Mr. Taiaroa, then at Otakou, we decided