

758. Will you be good enough to describe how the transactions were conducted?—It is not necessary for me to give an account of the state of Taranaki at that time?

759. No.—Mr. McLean was the Land Purchase Commissioner appointed by the Government at that time, and the European settlers had been driven up by the Natives into the township. Meetings of the Native owners of the land were repeatedly called and speeches were made, and at last, after a good deal of trouble, the boundaries of the land were fixed. A time was then appointed to pay down certain instalments of the purchase-money.

760. Was the price agreed upon?—Of course, after a considerable time and after a great many meetings the price was agreed upon.

761. In public, I suppose?—Yes, in public. It was perfectly well known. There was nothing done in private. The Natives were paid in the Resident Magistrate's Court. Any one who thought proper to do so could have gone in. That was the first time I got an inkling of the manner in which Native purchases were made. The Natives were divided into hapus or families, and there was an arrangement by which each family got, perhaps, £5 or £6. The money was put into pieces of paper, and the heads of these families were called in—not the whole of them—and the money was given to them, and after signing the deeds they went outside. Nearly the whole of the land in New Plymouth was acquired under that principle.

762. That amounted, then, to a public dealing with all the people, carried into effect when the land to be conveyed and the price to be paid had been agreed to by all the people through the heads of their hapus or families?—Yes.

763. As representing their respective hapus?—Yes. The heads of the people took the money away outside and divided it amongst themselves.

764. That was their look-out?—Yes.

765. Was that the Native manner or custom of dealing in relation to their lands?—Yes. I say so because I remember asking a chief at the time if that was according to their custom.

766. To your knowledge, when all matters were publicly conducted in that way, and a public understanding arrived at—when the deeds were signed by the heads of the families, and when they were paid in that manner—was there anything in the sense of repudiation by the Natives of their contracts?—No. Although in Taranaki the Native question was perhaps the most difficult one in the whole Island, yet, when these transactions were conducted in public, and the moneys were paid, there were never any disputes.

767. *Mr. Mackay.*] In what particular part of New Plymouth was this land?—One block of land was called the Fitzroy Block, another was called the Grey Block, and the third was called the Tataraimaka Block.

768. The Fitzroy and the Grey Blocks are on the north side of New Plymouth?—Partly on the north and partly on the south. With respect to my former answer *re* disputes, it has just occurred to me that there was one dispute, and that was in reference to the Waiwakaiho Block.

769. Am I safe in presuming that the only cause of dispute was after the purchase had been made, when the Natives said that the wrong Natives had sold?—Yes.

770. *Mr. Rees.*] But the Natives who made the contract never repudiated or went back on it?—No.

771. Do you recollect the prices paid for such land at that time?—The price, I think, was about 2s. 6d. an acre, but I am not certain. I have the figures at home. It might be 1s. 6d. or 2s. 6d. an acre. It was a very low price. It could be easily ascertained, for it is on record.

772. In the early days of the Native Land Court, were the Judges in the habit, when the Natives were disputing a case of boundaries, of themselves going on the land?—Oh, yes! I may say that that was one of my duties as a Judge of the Native Land Court, and, if I may be allowed, I will give you a short account of my own practice: I had been a very successful Land Purchase Commissioner long before going into the Native Land Court. Shortly after this period of which I have spoken to you, Mr. McLean was aware that I had a tolerable knowledge of the Native language by attending these meetings and through correcting some of the things taking place there. He was in a difficulty to get a surveyor. I am a surveyor by profession. A person having a knowledge of the Native language was needed at a place called Mokau, on the west coast of this Island. I went there to call public meetings of the Natives, in order to ascertain whether they were willing to dispose of any land in that part of the country. I met the Natives in different parts of the country. Some of them opposed any sale being made. But one chief in particular, named Takerei (father of the celebrated chief Wetera te Rerenga, who lived up there till lately), was very favourable to the sale. I was successful in getting the Natives to agree to the sale of a block of land and in putting everything in train. Afterwards Mr. McLean returned with me, taking with him the necessary money, and he purchased the first block of land at Mokau, from Takerei. I travelled with him for some time, and his practice was that which I attempted to describe just now, of the division of the money amongst the heads of the hapus or families. He carried the money there, and the whole of the Natives there agreed to Mr. McLean handing over this £500—which was the price agreed upon—to Takerei for that chief to divide, as he was a man of great consequence amongst them. He succeeded in getting their signatures to the deed, and the money was handed over in public, in presence of their own missionary and all the neighbouring chiefs, at the mission-station. After a time this chief (Takerei) came forward and divided the money, and there was such a scene on that occasion that I shall not forget to the latest day I live. The Maoris were there in their true savage character—they were very wild. After their dance was over the money was divided amongst them, and there never has been a dispute over the transaction from that day to this.

773. Takerei divided the money?—Yes.

774. Did he reserve very much for himself?—Very little. The only thing he asked for was two sections of 50 acres each for his two boys. Afterwards I made a survey of two other blocks of