

Then on the 12th May this was sent:—

“Sir E. O. Gibbes, Education Department, Wellington.—Commission recites, “And whereas it is alleged that the lands have not been let by public tender or otherwise to the best advantage.” Please supply Commission with names of persons who have so alleged, in order that they may be subpoenaed as witnesses.”

Then we sent this on the 14th May:—

“Education, Wellington.—Mr. Bird informs Commission he has no instructions to call and examine and cross-examine witnesses on behalf of Department, and only attends to give evidence if required as to system of education, and to assist Commission by producing files of official documents, &c. Commissioners think it desirable that Mr. Bird or other representative of Department should be instructed to lead evidence and cross-examine witnesses, especially on allegation against trustees as to not letting property to best advantage.”

Then the reply of the Department as to the names of persons who had alleged that the lands were not let to the best advantage was:—

“Department has no information as to source of allegations, but understands that considerable correspondence on subject took place some two months back in Hawke’s Bay papers.”

Then, on the 15th May, the Department sent this telegram:—

“As to having representative in any capacity other than witness, Department has no function under Commission and no information which would enable it to take action in direction suggested.”

That is all we have received from the Education Department. On receiving the telegram stating that the allegations in the Commission were founded on some newspaper correspondence, I instructed the Secretary to obtain the newspaper clippings relating to this matter, and these I have before me and will produce later on. I also instructed the Secretary to write to the editors of the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Hawke’s Bay Herald* the following letter:—

“DEAR SIR,—The attention of the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the management of the Te Aute trust estate has been drawn to certain articles, &c., in your paper relating to the management, &c., of the trust and conduct of the trustees. I am instructed to inform you that if you or the writers of the articles, &c., in your paper desire to give evidence before the Commissioners they will be glad to hear from you. Kindly reply at an early date. The Commission sits again to-morrow at 10.30 a.m.”

That was dated the 16th May. That is the position with regard to that matter. Speaking for myself—and I think the other Commissioners will agree with me—we thought the Education Department should be represented, and when we got the reply from the Education Department on the 11th May stating “Mr. Bird will represent Department” we understood that he was to represent the Department—that is to say, we understood that he was to be here to call evidence and examine witnesses, and so forth. However, if the Department does not wish to be represented I have nothing further to say.

*Mr. Bird:* Does that mean I may go?

*The Chairman:* We shall require you as a witness, probably. If the Department does not wish to be represented, we cannot compel it to be represented; but we expected it to be represented.

*Mr. Hogg:* All I understood was that Mr. Bird is simply here to give any information we require in regard to the education given at these Native schools, and generally to help the Commission in a voluntary way, but that he is not here to in any way influence evidence or to conduct the proceedings. Mr. Bird states that distinctly.

*The Chairman:* We know his position now.

*Mr. Hogg:* There seems to be an impression that he is here to conduct the proceedings on behalf of the Education Department, but he really takes no active interest in the Commission at all.

*The Chairman:* We understand that now, but we did not understand it before. There can be no misunderstanding in the future. The Education Department does not appear to conduct the inquiry in any way. I desire further to state that on Tuesday last the Commissioners visited Te Aute College, and were received with every kindness by Mr. and Mrs. Thornton and Archdeacon Williams’s people. The day was fine, and we had an opportunity of going over a good portion of the estate and seeing the work that is carried on. Yesterday we visited Hukarere School, and were received there with the same cordiality that we experienced at Te Aute. We also waited on Mr. Fielder, who is one of the trustees, and also acts as secretary to the trustees, and he has very kindly given us all the title deeds, papers, and documents in his possession, and has afforded us every facility for getting at all the facts in connection with the past management and history of this trust.

Subsequently,—

*Mr. Ngata* said,—The Natives present wish to know if the Commission will hold a sitting at Te Aute for the purpose of hearing them. The young people present say they wish the old people to say something before the Commission, because they are the ones who know the position of matters.

*The Chairman:* Before the Commission decides, I would like to know what questions they wish to bring before the Commission?

*Wiremu Erueti:* We should like to go into the question as to why the land was given originally.

*The Chairman:* That all appears in the Crown grants.

*Wiremu Erueti:* We should also like the boundaries of the land gone into. We want the surveys corrected.

*The Chairman:* That is not a matter referred to us by the Commission.