

133. There were therefore thirty-three owners present?—I wish to point out that although there were eight of my party, they were armed with proxies giving them much greater power than their numbers would indicate.

134. There were thirty-three owners present?—Yes, to the best of my recollection.

135. Do you know the number of owners in the block?—It depends on which block. There were only thirty owners in 1F.

136. You know that there were about two hundred owners in the whole of the blocks?—Yes.

137. Then we get this position: that a majority of thirty-three owners had the right to deal with the property of the balance of the two hundred—that is, counting the proxies?—Yes.

138. They had the right to deal with property belonging to the balance of the two hundred?—In Block 1H all the owners were present, although there were only six there.

139. Did the President of the Maori Land Board preside at the meeting of assembled owners?—Yes.

140. Was there one question put, or was the question put in connection with the proposed disposal of each block?—The latter.

141. You have had considerable experience in Native-land transactions?—Yes.

142. Do you know of any other case where an Order in Council was issued to enable a transaction to be completed and at the same time avoid the limitation provisions of the Native Land Act of 1909?—That is more for you, gentlemen.

143. I am asking whether you know of any other case where an Order in Council was issued to allow the sale to take place?—No; but that does not say it should not have issued.

144. Do you know of any of the influences that were at work after the first meeting and after the second meeting, before the Natives finally consented to the sale? Do you know of any of the Natives being interviewed, apart from the meetings, by the parties interested in the purchase?—As far as I am concerned, no.

145. Do you remember having a conversation with me about this transaction not many days ago, in my room upstairs?—Yes.

146. Do you remember your expression of opinion to me with regard to the sale?

*The Chairman:* I hardly think that is fair, Mr. Massey, asking a witness's opinion of what took place outside.

*Mr. Massey:* I am not asking his opinion of what took place outside.

*The Chairman:* You asked if he remembered a conversation in your room.

*Mr. Massey:* Yes.

*The Chairman:* Well, I do not know whether that has any bearing on the witness's evidence.

147. *Mr. Massey.*] It has a great deal of bearing. Mr. Macdonald expressed a very important opinion, and I want him to recollect it. I do not want to put the words into his mouth, but it will be necessary for me to repeat it, and I am quite willing to repeat it on oath. Do you remember the opinion you expressed to me of this transaction, Mr. Macdonald?—It would be a street opinion, would it not?

148. It would be your opinion, after being mixed up with the whole business?—What I stated was what all those who are opposed to your politics, I take it, would say.

149. There are no politics here. Do you remember the opinion you expressed here with regard to the transaction?—It is not worth much.

150. Even though it is your own opinion? Do you remember telling me that in your opinion the transaction was a gigantic swindle?—Yes.

151. *Hon. Sir J. Carroll.*] Did you enlighten Mr. Massey as to what way it was a gigantic swindle, or was it just a mere expression on your part?—Certain parties outside of Parliament Buildings had got an opinion for the Government and another opinion against. It was just a street expression.

152. The nature of the whole transaction you have described in your evidence?—Yes.

153. Mr. Massey asked you if, as an alternative course to selling or litigating, the Natives could not have retained the freehold of the land, and you said "Yes." Was not the freehold subject to a lease of about twenty-six years?—Quite so.

154. And the rent they were getting was practically a peppercorn rent?—Yes.

155. In considering the advisability of selling you were influenced in a way by the fact that you could not raise the £800, that you would have to wait for twenty-six years before you came into the property again, and for that twenty-six years the rent was a peppercorn rental?—Yes.

156. Was it under those circumstances that you decided it would be better for your clients to sell?—That is so.

157. *Hon. Mr. Ngata.*] With regard to Block 1F, you said that your people had only a small interest in it?—Yes.

158. What proportion of the block did their interest represent?—About 30 per cent., I should say.

159. To what party would the rest belong?—To the sellers and to those who were opposed—the Te Whiti and Tohu people.

160. The section represented by Pepene Eketone?—Yes.

161. In the other blocks—1G, 1H, and 1I—what proportion did your people represent?—The whole.

162. Did Pepene's people have an interest there at all?—Very small.

163. With regard to this £800, what impression was left on the mind of the committee as to it when they left Wellington?—That we had to raise this £800 or there would be no case at all.

164. Mr. Bell would not proceed with the case?—That is so.

165. Was anything said about his attending the meetings of assembled owners?—Yes. It was pointed out by one of the Natives that Mr. Bell should attend, but shortly after that Mr. Bell