

except in answer to communications from you or in any interview you had with me, I have never looked upon it as part of my duty to intimate to you or to anybody. Naturally I would not in cases of the kind. I would not have been able to do my work if I had been intimating every day to numerous people of this country regarding matters no doubt of importance to them personally.

25. After you returned from Rotorua in 1910 I came down to see you, and had a long interview with you in your office?—That may be so, but I cannot recall anything of the kind, nor could anybody else, I think, in my place.

26. Do you remember, at any rate, this circumstance in 1909—a body of over twenty gentlemen of both Houses waiting upon you to ask whether the Government were not impelled in any way and to settle this matter up; and do you remember your reply to those gentlemen: “I have seen the solicitors on both sides this morning, and arrangements have been made to settle the matter”?—I remember an interview of the kind, but I cannot from memory say when it took place, or how many gentlemen were present; and whatever my answer was to them you may depend upon it I would have given effect to it. You are suggesting that the whole nature of such an interview and any remarks I might have made are absolutely focussed into one sentence. Interviews of a kaleidoscopic character and on many points frequently took place with deputations, and I would not in a terse way say in a single sentence that I was going to settle anything, much less such a complicated matter as this was. Quite irrespective of all the interviews, I could not act without first getting rid of the legal complications so as to have a straight road to go, and we were never able to get it.

27. The Government set up what is called the Stout-Palmer Commission?—Yes, there was a Commission on which there were the two members.

28. Are you aware that that Commission held its inquiry behind my back, and that I knew nothing about it?—No, I do not know anything of the details of the Commission's work. I cannot, of course, be expected to.

29. Here is the Stout-Palmer Commission's report and a Press report of a deputation, accompanied by Mr. Okey, which waited upon you. [See exhibit.] Now, sir, did you attempt to get that report removed from the table?—I do not know who furnished that report to the Press. My recollection is that there were no Press reporters present, and I do not accept contributed Press reports on such matters. Many newspaper reports are very full and reliable, and others are not, and you cannot rely on them. You cannot take a statement like that concerning an important Commission as to what I was going to do.

30. I asked you to remove that report of the Commission?—It is quite certain that I could not do that. I would not undertake to do it, because the report of a Commission set up to inquire into any matter, once on record, it is a record for good, and it would not be within my power to remove it. I would not do it for you or any one else.

31. You are aware of this: that upon the strength of that report the Government stated in the House that they felt justified in issuing the Order in Council—that they based it on that report?—If that statement has been made—I do not know whether it has been made or not—it will be on record.

32. Do you not think it is a grave injustice to me to base other proceedings on the report of an inquiry which was held behind my back, and which contains a lot of statements that are not true?—I will answer that, necessarily, the Commission was responsible for the conduct of its business, and that in turn you were responsible for looking after your own business when the Commission was sitting.

33. I did not know anything of it until two months afterwards, and I wrote you a letter about such an outrage, and you replied, “I note what you say.” I put it to you whether it is a right thing for a Government to base other things on such a document without my knowledge?—I cannot do more than say that no doubt you are sincere in what you say, but I am bound to consider that the Commission reported in an honourable way unless there is reliable evidence produced to prove otherwise.

34. *Mr. Bell.*] You said that the Government were anxious, if possible, to protect the Native freehold interests in order to leave a clear road for the settlement of the disputes between Mr. Jones and Flower's executors or Herrman Lewis?—No, I did not say that. I said that we were anxious to purchase the freehold of the Mokau Estate with a view to getting clear of all the legal complications, and that if we did purchase the estate I was personally favourable, as an act of grace to Mr. Jones, to give him a lease of a portion of the minerals to enable him to recoup himself for some of the troubles and difficulties I understood he had gone through in connection with the estate.

35. So far as you were concerned, Herrman Lewis or the executors were on the titles as lessees?—At that time I cannot say from memory who they were.

36. Either Flower's executors or Herrman Lewis would be?—I assume Flower's executors or Herrman Lewis would be. I do not know the date you are referring to.

37. It would be some one holding adverse to Mr. Jones?—Yes.

38. What you had in mind was that the Government should buy the freehold?—We wanted to buy the freehold right out of the Mokau Estate, so as to get clear of all legal complications.

39. Did the Government have in mind to allow—after having purchased the freehold—Mr. Jones and the other people claiming adversely to him to fight it out between them, or to allow the people on the title to remain on the title and to give Mr. Jones compensation?—My answer is that if there were any legal complications we would not have considered it. It finally appeared to us that the best course to adopt would be to purchase the estate from the Natives so as to clear up all legal difficulties, and for reasons I have given we could not purchase the estate.