

in matters affecting their real welfare. There was no urgency displayed in this matter, no desire to hasten it, but ample time was given to all parties to put forward their claims; and not only was there ample time given but claims were solicited and hunted up in every direction in Taranaki itself. Yet, with the exception of the two tribes who sold the land on the banks of the Waitara, and another tribe on the banks of the Waiongana, who were joint claimants to a part of the block, no substantial claims were put in. If I were to say that no other claims were adduced I should be wrong, but I mean no substantial claims, no claims that could be recognized by the Government, or which would be regarded by the natives as valid. Certainly one man told me that his grandfather had once lived a short time on the land, and that he therefore expected compensation. Another told me that in one of their fights he was wounded and suffered great inconvenience there, and therefore thought it was right that he should have some consideration now that the land was sold. Now, this is the class of claims of which I have just been speaking, which it is clearly the duty of the Government to resist, as otherwise it would be an utter impossibility to carry out any purchase of land without defrauding the real owners. By compensating this class of claimants, the real owners would be deprived of what they are fairly entitled to, and merely because the Government chose to recognize fictitious claims of this character. What I maintain on the present occasion is, that the actual owners of the soil, the men known and recognized as such, have been conferred with, and their consent to the sale obtained. With respect to the offer of this land to the Governor at Taranaki, I may state that great pains were taken both previously to and after the offer, to inquire who the real claimants were, and to settle with them. And here, I should not omit one important fact that, in settling with them, a section of the Puketapu tribe which is located in the vicinity of the Waitara, was associated with Te Teira, Reimana, and others in effecting this sale. These men were exceedingly jealous of the offer when it was first made and were on the eve of protesting altogether against the sale of the land. Their claims were at once admitted by the selling party, but it was rather difficult to effect a satisfactory arrangement at once between the parties. It happened that they were too distinct and it was this which caused the difficulty. During the investigation which took place, and while the difficulty was being adjusted, I felt convinced that the claims then preferred by these conflicting parties were substantially good, and that in fact the sale must be proceeded with, or otherwise the natives who had offered the land would be treated with great injustice. The officer whom I instructed to conduct the negotiation (Mr. District Commissioner Parris), was requested to persevere in his inquiries into the matter from time to time; not in any way to hasten the arrangement, but to give full opportunity to opposing claimants to come forward and state their case. He not only did this, but he also took a great deal of trouble in visiting, as far as lay in his power, every part of his district, to make sure that there should be no substantial claim overlooked. I have already stated that there was a public notification from myself inviting all persons who had claims to bring them forward in order that they might be carefully investigated. No fresh claims were recorded however; no rights were shewn by the natives who opposed the sale, except the right which the land-league conferred upon them, that of claiming land everywhere, and of opposing the sale of land everywhere. In the officer who conducted the negotiation I place the most implicit reliance. He was on very friendly terms with William King and was universally liked by the natives of the district. He was instrumental I am almost certain, on one occasion, in saving the life of William King when a trap had been laid for him, by Ihiaia, and a party of Wanganui Natives. It was with great regret that I heard this officer's character assailed—a man who has taken such an interest in the welfare of the Natives of his district since he has been there, and who has used all his influence to prevent the disgraceful feuds continually being carried on in the district, frequently with the greatest success; and who has, in carrying out these duties, more than once run the risk of losing his own life. I regret exceedingly to find a public officer, who devotes his time to the interests of the community in which he resides, stigmatised in the manner in which Mr. Parris has been. I should have much preferred that any reflection in connection with this purchase should have been at once directed to myself, by whose instructions it was carried out; I should have preferred this, to hearing an officer thus stigmatised who is certainly worthy of a better reward.

I passed over from Taranaki, where the transaction had been so far initiated, and went almost directly to the Natives in Queen Charlotte's Sound, who were claimants to this block. I had a meeting of them at Waikawa, having first intimated to them by letter that I was coming, and the whole of the Natives there, after a careful enquiry into the extent, position, description of boundaries, and the rival claims of the Natives, agreed to sell their own interest in the land, besides a considerable extent of territory lying beyond the boundaries of the offered block. I devoted as much time as I was able to this investigation. I knew that these were the real claimants, and I found a great deal of unanimity among them about the sale of the land. (In reply to Mr. Fox)—The date of my letter to them is the 9th of April, and the interview took place on the 12th of April, 1859. The Chief Ropoama, who offered to dispose of his claim, was recognised as the head of the *hapus* or sub-divisions of the Ngatiawa tribe, who owned the land and sold it. He holds a high position among his people, and is much respected by the Europeans. On several occasions it was contemplated by the Natives of Waitara to invite him there, and to live among them as their Chief, to keep peace and order in the tribe. In this arrangement Wm. King (about whose chieftainship we have heard so much, and who undoubtedly was a Chief of the section of the Ngatiawa at Waikanae) acquiesced. No actual payment or promise of payment was made to the Natives at Queen Charlotte's Sound at that time. When they informed me that they had agreed to sell the land, my reply to them was, that they had better wait until matters had been finally arranged at Waitara, as I should not feel myself justified in concluding the purchase with them till then.

Having arranged with them that they should be paid after matters were settled at Taranaki, I left Ropoama's place for Wellington, where I notified to the Natives what had taken place with reference