

**R E P O R T**

**BY**

**M R. S E A R A N C K E**

**ON THE**

**N A T I V E L A N D S I N T H E W A I R A R A P A .**

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*Return to an Address of the House of Representatives to His Excellency the Governor,  
dated October 11th, 1860.*

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*(Mr. Carter.)*



MR. SEARANCKE TO CHIEF LAND PURCHASE COMMISSIONER.

Wellington, July\* 1860.

Sir,—

I have the honor to forward to you General Report on Land Purchasing operations in the District of the Wairarapa, also plan of the same, showing all the different Blocks bought: the Reserves made in the same for the Aborigines; the lands the purchase of which has not yet been completed; and the lands still in the hands of the Aboriginal owners.

The plan is compiled from the numerous distinct surveys made during the last seven years, and is still very deficient in many parts: this deficiency I propose to remedy by making a complete Trigonometrical survey of the whole country between Castle Point to the North, the Ranges on the West, and the Coast on the East and South, and by the completion of the surveys of Reserves in connection with the Trigonometrical survey.

The plan forwarded herewith can only be regarded as a Sketch Plan, though I believe correct in many parts.

I have, &amp;c.,

WILLIAM N. SEARANCKE,  
District Commissioner.Donald McLean, Esq.,  
Chief Commissioner,  
Auckland.

## Enclosure.

## GENERAL REPORT ON THE WAIRARAPA DISTRICT.

The Wairarapa District includes all the land laying between the Rimutaka and Tararua Ranges on the Westward, the Coast on the East and Southward and the Boundaries of the Block of land, known as the Castle Point Block on the Northward, and is very thinly occupied by a branch of the great Ngatikahungunu family, a tribe occupying the whole of the East Coast from Wairarapa Lake to the South, to Turanga to the North. This District, from its being an open country, was subjected to repeated predatory irruptions from the tribes resident in and about the neighbourhood of Wellington and the West Coast, who, driven from their own lands at Mōkau, Kawhia and Whaingaroa, had, headed by Te Rauparaha, migrated and settled here driving its former owners, the Muaopoko and Ngatikahungunu tribes before them; the former were almost extirpated, the latter retreated into Wairarapa, which they subsequently deserted, being completely broken-spirited by repeated attacks, retreating in a body to Nukutaurua, a settlement near Table Cape where they remained about twelve years, returning to Wairarapa barely two years previous to the first arrival of settlers in Wellington, at the invitation of Warepouri, and other Chiefs, who had been the cause of their migration. The fact of their being a broken tribe prepared them to welcome European settlers among them, and subsequently, fearful that the Government would remove them, consented to the alienation of their lands by sale to the Crown.

The sale of lands commenced in the year 1853, and was vigorously carried on both in that year and in 1854, the payments for most of these lands extending over a term of years, a system well adapted to enable the Maories to establish themselves comfortably and lay the foundation of future wealth and prosperity, had it been in the power of the Government to retain some control over the expenditure; this from Native jealousy and other causes was not done, and the result has been that the deferred system of payments for lands has had a directly opposite effect to what was intended (*i.e.*,) an incessant craving desire not only to sell the lands still in their hands but also to keep a constant agitation over the lands formerly sold in order to obtain from the Government renewed supplies of money for wasteful purposes which they appear to think they are entitled to. The leading Chiefs of Wairarapa have sold nearly the whole of their available land, they are now in a helpless state of debt and poverty, they lived on, or rather wasted in a thoughtless and prodigal display the capital derived from their lands, in place of laying it out to advantage and living on its interest. Flattered by Storekeepers and others with whom they wasted their money and who seemed to have listened with eager credulity to their description of their lands as boundless, they were able to obtain credit to an extent almost incredible considering that they had to overreach European sagacity. But a small proportion of these liabilities have been liquidated, and this state of debt and poverty has paved the way for discontent and jealousy against both the Government and the Europeans generally; has caused a much higher price to be demanded for the small pieces of land eagerly offered for sale, and also the claims on them to be boundless. They see the Europeans thriving in possession of lands which they now believe to have been foolishly sold at too low a price, and without disputing the actual sale of the land, unceasingly make renewed demands for payments, which demands having no other alternative, according to the terms (already fulfilled) of the deeds of sale, but to dispute and prove the fallacy of, has led, I am aware, to a very indifferent feeling on the part of the claimants to myself, and will be found to be prejudicial to any Officer of the Native Land Purchase Department acting in this District for some time, until at least time and non-success proves the fallacy of their claims.

In the blocks of land alienated, extensive reserves, much more than they occupy or make use of, have been made for the Natives, amounting altogether to about 20,224 acres, the right of run over

## REPORT ON THE WAIRARAPA LANDS.

these reserves I have in several instances succeeded in letting to advantage to the neighbouring run-holders; the Natives holding a right of occupation for agricultural pursuits of any portions they preferred. I have lately found that the rents being frequently monopolised by a few to the prejudice of the others, though the arrangement made was agreed to by all at the time, has been a fruitful source of trouble and dispute.

Nearly the whole of the lands still owned by the Maories are let to Europeans and produce a much larger rental per annum than they would if owned by the Government, these rents are generally received by those who did not join in or receive any benefit from the land sales of 1853 and 1854.

The approximate area of the Wairarapa District within the boundaries shewn on the plan is 1,200,000 acres, of which 957,864 acres have been alienated by the Maories to the Crown. Reserves to the extent of 20,224 acres have been made out of the alienated lands for their use and benefit. 40,480 acres are still under negotiation, small advances on account having been made on them. 187,856 acres are still in their hands and at their absolute disposal.

The quantity of land the purchase of which is still incomplete is large, the delay in its completion may be explained by the demands on it being so exorbitant, by their being so disputed as regards ownership, by the monopoly in some instances of the lion's share by a few only of those interested, and by the difficulty I find in assembling together the different claimants; all these difficulties considered, I have thought it the most judicious course to adopt, to at least delay the completion until the payments required were more moderate and within the limit of my instructions.

A rather important question requiring consideration is the 5 per cents. due to the Maories on the lands sold by the Government in certain blocks only; there is much excitement among them on this subject, and they have repeatedly demanded that the money so due should be paid to them, it appears that the undertaking as expressed in the deeds of sale, is that 5 per cent. of the whole sum received by the Government on account of land, should be laid out either in building Churches, Schools, Mills, or in some other way for their advantage. I would, therefore, most respectfully recommend that steps should be taken to settle this question. In the lower part of the valley, the Natives interested are unanimous in wishing that the monies due to them on the 5 per cents. should be expended in the erection of a mill, this I would recommend should be carried out, as it would be an encouragement for at least some time for them to carry on more industrial pursuits than they have lately been engaged in.

One of the principle assumed causes of discontent in this District is an attempt made by me (in conversational argument only) to induce Rawiri Piharau to remove from the land on which he is at present illegally settled, it having been bought from the Government by Europeans. It appears that when the block of land was sold on which the township of Featherston is situated, a reserve of 100 acres was guaranteed to Rawiri Piharau at a place called Motupiri on the Tauherenikau River, nearly three miles distant from the Torohanga, the spot on which he is now illegally located. The land now pointed out by the Natives as Motupiri was sold in 1854, by the then Waste Lands Commissioner to a settler named Vennell who has built a house on it with other considerable improvements, without noticing in any way Rawiri's claim, which the Natives say was brought forward before any improvements were made and frequently since.

Both on my arrival here and since, this question has been a trouble to me; urged on the one hand by the Europeans to give them possession of the lands illegally occupied by Rawiri, on the other to confirm him in possession of his holding or to give him his land at Motupiri, it has not been in my power to comply with the request of either. I could not give Rawiri land bought by Europeans though forcibly held by himself, nor could I give him a portion of Mr. Vennell's land which he holds by grant from the Crown, but I represented to him that his illegal withholding of European's land at the Torohanga would not be tolerated by the Government, and that he must remove, offering him land elsewhere; this was refused by him, I then made an attempt to purchase for Rawiri the land on which he is living, this I was in hopes to have succeeded in, but subsequently failed by the interposition of others; subsequently, I, in compliance with your instructions, informed Rawiri, who in the meantime had been joined by several other Natives from the Upper Hutt and Whanganui, that in order to remove a cause of trouble and ill-feeling between the Europeans and Natives, I would put him in possession of one hundred acres of land at Tauherenikau which I had surveyed for him at the time, and also pay him a sum of £100, if he would remove off the Torohanga land, when his crops were ripe and removable, this also he declined, saying that unless Te Manihera told him to remove he would not do so. I then saw Te Manihera who declined asking Rawiri to remove unless he were put in possession of the land at Mr. Vennell's homestead. In January last I had another meeting on this subject, when the whole of the Natives interested were present, and I was then informed that the only terms on which they would allow Rawiri to give up possession of the land, was, one hundred and fifty acres of land elsewhere and a sum of four hundred pounds as compensation for resigning his claim to the land held by Mr. Vennell. As I could not comply with the terms, I informed the Natives so, and this most vexatious question still remains in *statu quo*, and as a grievance on which the Natives ground all their complaints.

In conclusion, I deny that the feeling of the Natives with respect to Land Purchases, except through their own mutual jealousies, is bad.

A few, principally those with small or doubtful claims, are now headed by Te Manihera, a Chief of some influence, to oppose any further alienation of land to the Crown. Another more friendly party exclaim loudly against the delay in the purchase of their lands, the cause I have already explained. Furthermore, is it not preferable that they should rather bare a complaint of non-purchase or non-completion of purchase, than that those feelings of amity which have so long existed and still exist in this District between the two races should be endangered.

WILLIAM N. SEARANCE,  
District Commissioner.