

No. 3.

COPY OF A DESPATCH FROM GOVERNOR GORE BROWNE C.B., TO THE RIGHT HON. LORD STANLEY, M.P.

Government House,
Auckland, New Zealand, June 9th, 1858.

(No. 45.)

Memorial 19th May,
1858.
Report of Native Secretary,
1st June.
Report of Debate House
of Representatives, 8th
June.

MY LORD,—

I have the honor to enclose a printed copy of a Memorial from the inhabitants of New Plymouth, addressed to the General Assembly,—a report on it by the Native Secretary,—and the report of a debate in the House of Representatives on the same subject.

The two reports contain such full information that I need trouble you with but few remarks from myself. I will, however, endeavour to give a precis of the enclosures as well as I am able.

2. The Memorial commences by describing the extent of the Province of New Plymouth, and complains that 1782 Natives hold two millions of acres,—while the Europeans, (2488 in number,) occupy only 11,000 acres. It will be seen by the Native Secretary's report that the number of Natives is incorrectly estimated; nor is it easy to draw any special conclusion from the quantity of land in their possession, as it is well known that the Maories still hold seventeen or eighteen millions of acres in the Northern Island. Every proper exertion is, and has always been made to acquire lands not required for the actual support of the Native Race—particularly at New Plymouth, for which purpose, money has been left for some time in the Treasury at that place.

3. After relating in detail the circumstances connected with the murder of Rawiri in 1854, the Memorialists express their opinion that the enforcement of the law against his murderers would have been wise and prudent. On this head, I need make no remark, as I had not then arrived in the Colony,—but I may observe that, in abstaining from interference, Colonel Wynyard did but continue a policy never yet departed from.

4. In the next paragraph, they speak of the lamentable result of the policy pursued during the last four years; but I am not aware of a single instance in which a European has been interfered with, without his obtaining prompt redress.

5. Memorialists complain that Katatore, a murderer, “took the foremost place in the consideration of the Government, while the men who remained consistent were thrust aside.” It is to be regretted that Katatore was received with honor by the Provincial Government, who did so without seeking the consent of the Colonial Government, and without my approval. The Colonial Government has always maintained a strict neutrality.

6. After describing the assassination of Katatore by Ihaia, and the helpless condition to which the latter was reduced by his opponent, W. King, they proceed to say that a Memorial was addressed to me, praying me to rescue Ihaia and his people, and that it was “responded to by the offer to remove Ihaia and his followers to the Chatham Islands, which was at once refused, for Ihaia could at any time have secured his safety by retreat.” On this I must observe that it was only on an assurance that Ihaia could not effect a retreat that I consented to interfere at all, and that I only did so in the hope of preventing a massacre of helpless followers (including women and children) which, I was assured in a Memorial from the settlers, was otherwise inevitable.—(Vide Enclosure No. 6, in my Despatch No. 23, of 6th April last.)

7. Memorialists proceed to say that the settlers have always “evinced a deep interest for the welfare of those Natives, who, by their efforts to sell land have been plunged in a harassing war, and have been refused the assistance of the Government.” This is the gravamen of the complaint; and I therefore state distinctly that I am most anxious to acquire land at New Plymouth,—and that I foresee there can be no permanent peace until the Native Title is extinguished (with exception of the necessary Reserves) over all the land between the town and the Waitara river. To obtain this desirable object, I will, however, never permit land to be taken without the consent of those to whom it belongs; nor will I interfere “to compel an equitable division of common land among the respective claimants,” as desired by the Memorialists in one of the concluding paragraphs of the petition. This decision is not less one of expediency than of justice, for the whole of the Maori Race maintain the right of the minority to prevent the sale of land, held in common, with the utmost jealousy. An example of this on a large scale may be seen in the Waikato district, where the election of a King is proposed and defended on the plea that a King is necessary to give strength and assurance to the League established to prevent the sale of land to the Colonial Government. To accede to the request of the Memorialists in this particular would, therefore, attract the attention and awaken the suspicions of the Maories, not only at New Plymouth, but throughout the Colony, and would, in all probability, produce a general commotion. W. King has no sort of influence with me or the Colonial Government: we believe him to be an infamous character; but I will not permit the purchase of land over which he has any right without his consent.

8. The Memorial goes on to say, “conflicting advice, however well intentioned, can but cause an increase of embarrassment, and the Natives listen now to one opinion and then to another, until they feel their utter helplessness more keenly.” These remarks corroborate what I stated in my despatch, No. 38 of 17th May; I entirely concur in them, and have no hesitation in saying that the interference of unauthorised individuals, and the comments and advice made and given by the newspapers, paralyze the efforts of the Government, and may any day mislead or irritate the Natives into aggressions, the necessary repression of which will be the commencement of a serious war. To prevent such indiscretion in a free country is, of course, impossible; but an admission of the fact by the Speaker, on behalf of the Provincial Council is worthy of remark.