

COMMISSIONER'S RE-
PORTS AND SPEECHES.

D. McLean, Esq.
(Evidence.)

occupy the land but to take care and send them some of the fruits of it, which was accordingly done. In several cases returned slaves were afterwards invested with a right to the soil. * * *

The whole of the purchases previously made at Taranaki had been effected on the same principle as the present one: namely, that of acquiring the land from the different clans and subdivisions of those clans which came in from time to time to offer it. I never, during my residence there, heard of any of the pretended claims that have since sprung into existence, in the imagination, not of the Natives themselves, who are most interested and whose imaginations are easily worked on, but of persons who have a false sympathy instead of a true one with the Natives. * * *

With reference to the particular block under consideration, the claims of the actual owners were carefully enquired into. Notice was given publicly at the time of the purchase to such absentee claimants as were known to have a right to the soil. It was not considered necessary to go about the country to rake up claims, or to induce Natives to prefer them. It was well known that when any block of land was offered for sale, there was no hesitation on the part of claimants to come forward to receive that portion of the proceeds to which the extent of their claims might entitle them. The sale of any land in the country soon becomes known throughout it, from one end to the other; and it is often found that a hundred fictitious claims are adduced, when the actual owners altogether do not exceed thirty or forty persons. There has been a great deal said about unsatisfied claims in different parts of the country, but my own conviction is that many of those claims have been manufactured. At all events, I found that in the course of a few months after the time of the first offer of the land and my notification of it to the tribes at the South, several parties were adducing claims who had never previously done so. * * *

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. * * *

In the case of this purchase, the river on which the land is situated is a place to which the Natives have been much attached, and which many of them were latterly indisposed to alienate. But I quite deny the assertion which has been made here this day, that there are 80 persons at Waitara who have claims to this block of land. If there were 80 claimants there besides those at Waikanae, Port Nicholson, and Queen Charlotte's Sound, they never made their claims known, and the ancestors of many of them were never known to have claims there. Had there been 80 claimants, I believe the invitation given to the Chiefs soon after the Governor's visit to Taranaki, to put in such claims, would have been sufficient to bring them forward. That invitation was dated March 18, 1859, and was to the following effect:

Ngamotu (New Plymouth), 18th March, 1859.

FRIENDS, THE MEN OF WAITARA,

Salutations to you. This is a word to you to request you to make clear (point out) your pieces of land which lie in the portion given up by Te Teira to the Governor.

You are aware that with each individual lies the arrangement as regards his own piece; in like manner Te Teira has the arrangement of his piece. Another cannot interfere with his portions to obstruct his arrangements, for he has the thought for what belongs to himself. This is a word to you. Do not you, without cause, interfere with Te Teira's and Te Retimana's part, for they have consented to the sale of their part, in the presence of the tribe, in broad daylight, and the terms with him for his piece will soon be settled. We will not urge for what belongs to another man, as with him is the thought as regards his own piece.

And now, do not you be dark towards him, as his proceedings give light.

DONALD MCLEAN.

To Wiremu Kingi Whiti,
To Wiremu Ngawaka Patukakariki,
To all the men of Waitara.

It has been recently stated that, in addition to those persons who are known and recognized as the actual owners, claimants are to be met with at the South as numerous as a swarm of bees; but I think that those who say so, would find very great difficulty in establishing anything beyond mere assertion of right to the land comprised in the Government purchase. Knowing how scattered the claimants were, and the difficulty of getting them all together in any one place, at any one time, I was a long time pursuing investigations before I myself came to the conclusion that the purchase was quite satisfactory; but the more I enquired into the case, and came into contact with impartial Natives