

I have urged the Natives to begin at once to settle all their land disputes, and to ascertain exactly mutual boundaries, in order that, when the Runanga meets, the land may be marked off upon the map, and the names of its rightful claimants registered in a book. I have promised that a map will be supplied, and that a surveyor shall assist to lay off and delineate the subdivisions, under the authority of the Runanga, whose decision upon a claim shall be final. I may here remark, that I look upon any attempt at individualization of title, at the present time, as not only hopeless, but impolitic. I trust that the Natives will be content to deal with their lands as a whole as much as possible. That is, that the ownership of a certain block will be vested formally in a certain division of the tribe; that all minor arrangements respecting its management will be transacted by the lesser Runanga of that division; and that all such divisions will permit the great Runanga of the district to keep under its control all matters of importance respecting all the lands. I trust that this system will result beneficially in the Runanga giving the right of occupation of certain holdings to individual Natives, and thus establishing a tenure by custom and consent which may afterwards be changed into fee simple.

Another matter which will have to be carefully attended to from the beginning, prior to the full working of the new system, is the administration of the law between Europeans and Natives. We have established the fact (in Shirley's case) that cases of cattle trespass, which have been the origin of much trouble, can be settled by an appeal to law. I have pointed out to the Natives that any similar cases, and all debt cases, can be heard before the Resident Magistrate in Napier, at any time; and no doubt many will be so heard. These, however, will be all Maori *v.* European. I fear that an action for debt by a settler against a native will not be so readily brought before the Court, nor the judgment of the Court so readily submitted to. Having the duty of introducing law where law has not hitherto existed, one must not be discouraged too much at the difficulties which arise in its absence; but rather use these very difficulties as means towards accomplishing the desired end. For instance, the troubles which have arisen from the grass money difficulty have had much effect in preparing both sides to accept a system which promises to remove them. I have little doubt that, with prudent and quiet management, the exercise of personal influence, and a proper action through the leading men of the tribe, an action for debt against a Native might be now brought safely, heard, adjudged, and judgment executed. I recommend that this step be taken as early as is consistent with safety: but a break down in it would seriously prejudice the whole negotiation. I regret to say that the Natives are deeply indebted to the settlers, as a rule; and that the fact is, that the Maories presume upon their independence of law and defy its administration. This state of feeling has grown up, I am persuaded, from sheer neglect on the part of the Government; it must now be taken as a fact, and the root of the evil removed; the symptoms cannot be touched but with the greatest care. I have clearly impressed upon the Natives, publicly and privately, that the acceptance of the new system will entail complete submission to the law. They acknowledge "it is good." I earnestly recommend that, whatever course may be found practicable so long as there are only English laws and English courts to deal with, as soon as a law of their own can be administered through Courts in which their own Assessors sit, the utmost firmness be exhibited from the very first. The proper administration of this part of the law will form, perhaps, the only criterion of success in the eyes of the Europeans.

The next matter to be dealt with before the initiation of the system, is the illegitimate leasing of lands; and this I look upon as question charged with difficulty. Greedy Europeans will endeavour to induce the Natives to grant them blocks of land, trusting to the double assurance that the Government cannot take any steps now to prevent them, and will not attempt to induce the Natives to abandon any contract once made. It will be of little consequence if even the whole country outside the Ahuriri Plains is so leased; but if any portion of the plains be so taken up, very serious damage will be done. I have done all in my power to prevent the occurrence of such an event. The Natives have promised me, unhesitatingly, that they will not proceed to deal with these lands until the Runanga has met. I have also warned all Europeans. Nevertheless I fear much mischief will be done, if not in the actual allotment of extensive lands, at least in the excitement of the Native mind by those who press them with bargains. I have been able to devise no plan for defeating these greedy speculators, without encountering the whole body of those who have illegal leases all over the country: but as no tenure can be recognized, even under license, but that of depasturing, I should be inclined, on finding any man in actual occupation, by fencing or otherwise, upon the plain, to proceed at once against him under the Land Purchase Ordinance, having first consulted the Natives about it. I should add here, that the Natives undertake to be ready to furnish a list of all engagements with Europeans, to the Runanga. I have further impressed upon the Natives the importance of letting no disturbance arise, from questions of grass money or otherwise, prior to the initiation of the new system, after which, I have told them, their own law will protect their property. This they have agreed to.

I now come to sketch the system itself in the shape which I conceive best adapted to the circumstances of the country; and I will then proceed to suggest the first steps to be taken under it.

The Province, as a whole, may form conveniently one great Native district, all the Natives within it being of the Ngatikahungunu tribe. This district may be roughly divided into three parts, with separate geographical conditions. Wairoa, to the North—all the country beyond the purchased Mohaka block. Waipukurau, including Porangahau and Rua Taniwha, to the South. And the Ahuriri plains in the middle. These divisions are not of much importance, except as showing the three head quarters where Resident Magistrates should be posted, and where meetings of Natives may most conveniently be gathered. For the working of the new system the Natives already understand that one great Runanga will meet on the Ahuriri plains. This Runanga will consist of the Commissioner and of Assessors, two of the latter being chosen by themselves, subject to the Governor's approval, from each of the following groups of paha.