

MEMORANDA AND CORRESPONDENCE ON THE SUBJECT OF THE TAURANGA EXPEDITION.

No. 1.

MEMORANDUM by MINISTERS as to sending an Expedition to Tauranga.

Ministers have carefully considered the subject of the expedition to Tauranga, and have come to a clear conclusion. In their opinion, the expedition should go, and that without any delay. The grounds of Ministers opinions are these :—

1. The General is of opinion that, in a Military point of view, he would derive considerable advantage from the diversion,—and great deference is due to this opinion.
2. There is no doubt that Tauranga has been the route for all the disaffected Natives from the East Coast to go to and return from the war in Waikato. It was used for the same purpose during the war at Taranaki in 1860–61.
3. All the Natives of the west side of the harbour are decided enemies—have been to the war—are there now—or are preparing to go.
4. There are large crops there, just ready for gathering in, upon which the Waikato rebels depend—especially on some plantations a short distance in the bush, at the back of the harbour.
5. In 1860, the principal store house of gunpowder was at the back of Tauranga, and the supplies taken to it were taken through the harbour. During the present war it has been the route by which both munitions of war and food have been taken to the Waikato.
6. To stop this route would be a serious blow to the enemy, and would assure and encourage our friends. It would not raise additional enemies, but rather the reverse;—in this point of view, advantage rather than disadvantage would result.

Ministers think there should be no delay for the following reasons :—

1. It has become publicly known that such an expedition is in contemplation—to delay now would be considered a proof of weakness, and encourage the enemy, and operate injudicially on the undecided.
2. On Friday last a vessel was sent to Tauranga (a regular trader there, so as not to create suspicion), with a view to take on board Archdeacon Brown, and the few European inhabitants who live near, as the Natives, knowing the value of Tauranga to themselves, have declared their intention, if that part be interfered with by the Government, of destroying the Mission Station; and, on finding the Europeans have left, or, on hearing, that an expedition is intended, they may proceed to carry that threat into execution. Apart from loss of property, it would be a misfortune if the Mission buildings were destroyed, as they would afford accommodation for about 500 men. It would therefore be highly desirable that the expedition should proceed at once, if at all, in order that the first information the Natives should receive of it would be that the troops are on their way to take possession of the Mission Station.

Ministers are of opinion that 500 or 600 men are fully sufficient for all that can be done at Tauranga. Without further orders, the troops should not go to the east side of the harbour at all,—none of the Natives from there, as far as is known, have gone to the war, and many are decidedly our friends. The expedition should take possession of the Mission Station and all the crops on the west side, stop the Waikato road, and prevent communication across the harbour. The object being, not to open new ground, but to co-operate with the General, by creating a diversion in his favour.

The Natives of Maketu are friendly to the Government, and have rendered assistance by stopping war parties from crossing their territory, compelling them to go by sea to Tauranga; and, from the best information in possession of the Government, the great bulk of the Natives to the East are well disposed. An expedition, therefore, in that direction would be unjust; and, if it were not, is altogether impracticable. There are no harbours for anything but the smallest vessels. Maketu is about 20 miles from Tauranga. Opotiki at least 60; and Tauranganui about 200 miles. To Maketu the road is open and good, but beyond that, most difficult—in fact, to troops, impracticable. There is no doubt that the Ngatiporou have sent men to the war, but the number was not large,—and those left held a meeting, and it is believed decided that they would not receive this war party back amongst them. The latest information relating to the East Coast Natives received by Government will be found in the appended Memorandum by Mr. Baker.

In expressing these views, Ministers trust that they will be coincided in by His Excellency, as, however strong their own opinions may be on the subject, they desire to pay great deference to His Excellency's knowledge and experience in Native matters, and would be most unwilling to urge forward the proposed expedition, if the Governor feels there is any reason to apprehend unfavourable results, or that it would prejudicially affect his contemplated plans.

With regard to Taranaki, Ministers do not think it necessary to strengthen the garrison there at present, beyond the detachment now under orders to proceed there; and, with regard to Wanganui, they think that 200 men would be a sufficient reinforcement, and that it would be in time to send them on the arrival of the "Armenian," now hourly expected, as the danger there is not immediate, but would be the result of what may take place at Taranaki, to which place a considerable number of Natives are gone from Wanganui, and who are, to be feared, on their return, from their present expedition either successful or unsuccessful. The latest information received by the Government, relative to the West Coast Harbour expedition, will be found in the appended Memorandum of Mr. Parris.

FREDK. WHITAKER.

Auckland, 19th January, 1864.