

Enclosure 1.

Enclosure 2.

I enclose a copy of notes of a meeting I had with the whole body of the prisoners in the Chatham Islands, and of a letter which I addressed to Captain Thomas, on the principal points which I considered required immediate attention.

With regard to the general control exercised by Captain Thomas in the Chatham Islands, I may state that so far as I could learn from personal observation, his kindness of manner and honesty of purpose, have won for him considerable influence among the Natives; and the way in which he discharges his duties to both races in a position rendered very difficult by the conflicting interests and animosities of a young and disorganized community appears satisfactory.

The influence he has obtained with the Native prisoners has, I think, prevented any evil result, which might have been entailed by what on a cursory view, I cannot but look upon as the unsatisfactory character of the military guard.

The redoubt is, I believe, admitted to be practically useless for the purpose for which it was constructed, and a considerable number of the guard have figured rather as a public nuisance—than as a protection or example of discipline and order to the community. The support of the two public-houses is mainly due to these men, and drunkenness and other lawless habits have sprung up in a previously quiet and orderly locality.

If a military guard is still to be kept up, I respectfully submit that a smaller number of efficient well-paid men would answer the same purpose as the present force, which, when complete, consists of two officers, besides Captain Thomas, two non-commissioned officers, and twenty-four men.

I do not think that even the present force as now constituted would be of any material good were any serious difficulties to arise, but the existence of a guard of some sort is a necessary precaution to prevent the necessity arising for a larger force. As to the constitution of the guard, I think that one good officer under Captain Thomas, who should speak the Maori language, would be sufficient. He should actively supervise the non-commissioned officers, and see to the efficient discharge of the duties of the medical officer. The number of non-commissioned officers and men need not be greater than sufficient to keep up a sentry.

The present system of supplying rum and rations might be advantageously altered, at least after a time, and the men be made to provide themselves. I give the above opinion with considerable diffidence having no knowledge or experience of military matters, but feeling strongly that some change is required on the grounds of economy and efficiency.

The monthly pay of the guard amounts to about £170, or £2,640 per annum. I would submit for consideration whether a sufficient police force, who would form part of the general scheme of an Armed Constabulary, might not well be substituted for the present ill-organized semi-military guard. I can see no necessity for supplying rum and rations.

On the subject of the medical officer, it will be seen from my letter to Captain Thomas, and from the notes of the prisoners' statements, that the evidence was conflicting.

The statement of the sick Natives, made without conference, was uniformly and unhesitatingly to the effect that they were neglected. There was no independent testimony to be obtained. I must state that I was far from satisfied on the matter; as I have requested Captain Thomas to report his opinion, I will say no more. It is needless to observe what cruelties may be perpetrated from forcing men to work when suffering from sickness.

Enclosure 3.

I enclose a Return prepared at my request by Sergeant Elliott, showing the number of men engaged by private individuals, and on public works. My letter to Captain Thomas will show the opinion I formed on this subject. I may state that upwards of £100 was earned by prisoners during shearing alone. I submit that Captain Thomas might have special directions, giving him authority to employ the prisoners on the ground set apart for a Resident Magistrate's house.

If the directions contained in my letter to Captain Thomas are approved, I would respectfully suggest that Captain Thomas should be informed to that effect. I have, &c.,

The Hon. J. C. Richmond, Wellington.

W. ROLLESTON, Under Secretary.

Enclosures.

NOTES of a Meeting with the Prisoners on Monday Evening, 27th January, at 7 p.m.

I explained briefly that I had brought them a message from the Government,—that in compliance with a promise given some time ago that some of their number should return if well conducted; I was ready to take back with me those whose names I read out. It rested with them to go or stay as they pleased. I was here also to hear anything they had to say to the Government.

Nepia (Omaranui) said: "He was glad to hear of the goodwill and mercy of the Government, and glad to see me here to announce it. For his part he did wrong in rebelling, because of his youth; and he had suffered severely for it both here and in New Zealand. At night he was at ease, but he was punished by day. The day trouble was that they were ordered to work when not well. When told to work they said 'wait a bit,' but those in command said 'go at once.' They had to work too on wet days. They had few clothes, and the cold climate made this a great hardship."

Second complaint.—When leaving, Bishop Williams told them to adhere to their religion, and when they arrived, Captain Thomas gave them books. Then some of their number gave information that they were having Hau Hau services. If it had not been for Captain Thomas they would have left off service altogether.

Third complaint.—They were ordered to fall in and their private parts exposed. They would have been badly off if it had not been for Captain Thomas.

On my saying that these were matters which Captain Thomas would inquire into and deal with, he said it was true Captain Thomas had not heard of these complaints. Their principal complaints were, that Bob (Sergeant Elliott) had oppressed them. The Doctor too was no use, or his medicines.

Wi Mahuika (Poverty Bay) said he was gratified to hear that he might go if he liked. He had been longing to get back, though he does not know where he is to go. That is for the Government to say.

As to what the last speaker said, there were very few grounds of complaint against those in command, they were for the most part very good to them. The erection of the barracks and the