

REPORT ON NATIVE RESERVES

some cases, with a view to obtaining Crown grants for the respective pieces. This work is to the Natives a very expensive process, and I would respectfully suggest to the consideration of the Government whether, in the case of these inalienable reserves, it would not be just and wise to remit the payment of Crown grant and registration fees.

The collection and distribution of the rents of Wellington Reserves, which—since the retirement, in 1867, of the last Commissioner of Native Reserves, Mr. Swainson—has been chiefly performed by Mr. Young, now reverts to the Commissioner. This duty, and the requirement for my presence in settling a number of disputes among Natives claiming interests in reserves about Cook's Strait, necessitated my removal from Auckland to Wellington. I have much pleasure in bearing witness to the satisfaction which Mr. Young appears to have given to the Natives in the performance of his duty.

The legal position of many of the Native Reserves is such that the Commissioner cannot grant valid leases or recover rents. The present mode of reserving a piece of land by bringing it under the operation of "The New Zealand Native Reserves Act, 1856," is not always a convenient one, and does not apply when a Crown grant has issued under the Native Land Acts. Some simple form of settlement is much required, as the Natives frequently are anxious to "tie up," as they term it, their cultivation lands from the risk of temptation to sell in times of pressure or emergency. The powers of a trustee to manage such lands also require defining.

I have already alluded to the propriety of providing by landed endowment for the necessary expenses of Native Hospitals, Lunatic Asylums, and Vaccination Establishments. These institutions are indispensable, and it is much more easy now to provide endowments than it will be after the lapse of a few years. The Confiscated lands appear to be fitting territory to afford such endowments, and I have already submitted a list of sections for such appropriation, but the process for setting them apart by the existing law is so cumbrous, and, withal, so uncertain in its effect, as to be almost unserviceable.

All these circumstances point to the necessity of a new law being passed that, while repealing the existing Acts affecting Native Reserves, shall gather up what is good in them, and add clauses to meet new requirements. I would respectfully recommend that such a bill be introduced to the Legislature.

Sir William Martin's draft of a Native Reserves Bill, printed last year, is an excellent basis for such a measure.

Account current to 30th June, 1872, is attached.

Wellington, 16th August, 1872.

CHARLES HEAPHY,
Commissioner of Native Reserves.