

than a year after the adjudication by the Land Court—the Hon. Mr. McLean visited the district, and, without the knowledge or consent of the Provincial Government, made large gifts of land to the Natives—both sellers and non-sellers—believing, as he states, that this was necessary in order to preserve the peace of the country. The return of reserves made by Mr. McLean (over and above the awards of the Court and the reserves made by the Commissioner) shows an area of 10,300 acres—it is probably as much more—and Mr. Carkeek has since reported that additional reserves have been made by Mr. Kemp amounting to 4,000 acres. Some of the land thus given away consists of sand-hill and swamp, but by far the greater portion of it is of first-class quality, and would, it may be safely presumed, realize more than the upset Government price.

Independently of this, Mr. McLean has granted to the Natives a block of land, comprising run-holder's improvement (*i.e.* Rakehou, 500 acres), on which the Provincial Government had relied for the recovery of £800 back rents paid over to the Natives.

I do not consider that it was necessary to make any further concessions to the Natives; nor do I believe that the peace of the district would have been endangered had the Government continued the vigorous action approved of and so successfully commenced by the Hon. the Premier.

Under all the circumstances, I feel bound, on behalf of the Province, to claim payment from the General Government, at the rate of £1 per acre (being the lowest upset price), for the whole of the land given or promised to be given by the Hon. Mr. McLean, in the carrying out of a General Government policy.

I further claim that the whole of the expenses connected with this reopening of the question, and of the surveys of the additional blocks given away by the Hon. Mr. McLean and Mr. Kemp, be defrayed by the General Government.

I have, &c.,

I. E. FEATHERSTON,

Superintendent.

The Hon. W. Gisborne.

No. 29.

The Hon. W. GISBORNE to His Honor I. E. FEATHERSTON.

SIR,—

Colonial Secretary's Office, Wellington, 10th February, 1871.

I have to acknowledge the receipt of your Honor's letter of the 26th ultimo, in which you request that the additional reserves (about 15,000 acres), which the Native Minister found it necessary to make for the Natives in the settlement of the disputed Rangitikei-Manawatu land purchase, may be paid for out of Colonial funds at the rate of £1 per acre.

The Government have carefully considered the representations made in your letter, but they do not feel themselves justified in agreeing to propose to the Assembly the admission of this claim.

The purchase from the Natives of the land in question has been specially intrusted by the Legislature to the General Government, and as you, who have acted for many years as Commissioner under the Government for the negotiation of that purchase, are well aware, exceptional difficulties of no ordinary magnitude embarrassed that negotiation. It should, however, be distinctly borne in mind that, while the responsibility of the purchase rested with the General Government, they acted in the matter in the interests of the Province of Wellington, which would deal with the lands purchased, and be exclusively entitled to the proceeds thereof. The only interest which the General Government, as representing the Colony, have in the purchase is, that the Province should at the earliest possible period have quiet possession of the block, with a view to its sale and settlement. The Government believed, in October, 1869, that your able and unwearied efforts in the completion of the purchase had been successful, and that the repeated decision of the Native Land Court would, so soon as the reserves specified by the Court should be marked out, remove every obstacle to the peaceable occupation of the land, and accordingly they issued a notice in the *Gazette* of the 16th of October, 1869, that the Native title to the block had been extinguished, subject to certain specified awards made by the Court in favour of the dissentient Natives. Unfortunately, this did not turn out to be the case. Certain of the Natives, acting on the instigation of European advisers, resisted not only the execution of the surveys of the blocks awarded to them by the Court, but also the trigonometrical and detailed surveys of the rest of the blocks. After repeated stoppages, the conviction of McDonald and Miritana, referred to by you, appeared to have resulted in their acquiescence, the surveys proceeded far towards their completion, and there seemed to be a fair prospect of their being completed without further obstruction. Unfortunately, in this stage the Natives were advised by Mr. Travers, the solicitor who had conducted their case in the Land Court, that they would be justified in turning off the surveyors, because they had not been fairly treated in the Land Court; and further suggestions of an inflammatory character were made to them by him, through their agent, Mr. McDonald (as will be seen in the enclosed copy of Mr. Buller's letter of September 16th, 1870). The result was the renewed and much more determined obstruction of the surveys, and the expressed resolution of all the dissentient Natives, particularly Miritana, to resist the occupation of the district by the Government as long as one of them should live. It became clear that the spirit of resistance evoked by this last interference of Messrs. McDonald and Travers was much more determined than that which previously existed, and such as bid fair, even if the surveys should be completed, effectually to prevent the peaceable settlement of the district.

Three courses were open to the Government; 1st, To suppress the resistance by force. This would probably have resulted in a serious disturbance, involving not only the disputed district but the adjacent settled district of Rangitikei. And even if such a result were escaped, it was certain that so long as such resistance continued, the peaceable occupation of the district by settlers would be impossible, and that the settlement of the other block on the Manawatu River would be greatly retarded, if not absolutely stopped.