

There are yet claims other than these which have been referred to me, which, however, are not of such a character as to lock up the district or impede progress to any serious extent.

The question of Native reserves has received attention, and will form the subject of a separate report.

With such assistance as I received from the survey staff placed at my disposal by the Commissioner for Confiscated Lands, I have been enabled to carry out the settlement of these awards, in conjunction with the progress of the general survey work in hand, in such a manner as to incur but very slight expense, which can be fairly looked upon as costs appertaining to the discharge of my particular duty. I have a right to say that the Government have saved a very large outlay in the matter of survey by the course adopted by me in dealing with this question.

In explanation of the methods employed to procure the results arrived at, I must state that, from careful investigation of the conditions under which compensation awards were made, I drew the following conclusions:—

1. That their floating character was a complete bar to any attempt on the part of Government to deal further with the confiscated lands until their settlement.

2. That from the length of time which had elapsed since the awards were made, and the limited extent of land suitable left for their selection, there was great cause to fear dissatisfaction on the part of the Natives when making the attempt to carry them out.

3. That the cost of selecting (with the approval and consent of the Natives interested) 119 different sections of land in a district forty miles long, surveying and issuing Crown grants for the same, would prove extremely heavy, the operation tedious, and until its completion a complete stoppage would be put to land sales or progress in the district.

4. That I had to deal with a question of private and not public estate, the Natives being entitled to receive their lands under Crown grant, and to deal with it as they pleased as their absolute private property.

To the frank recognition of this latter conclusion, to the assurance that it would be carried out in good faith, I believe, is due the withdrawal by Major Kemp of his claim to 16,000 acres made and persisted in; because Major Kemp and his followers had, or imagined they had, cause to think the Government did not intend carrying out the awards as it was pledged to do; for which belief, the delay of five years in doing it afforded apparently sufficient ground.

A licensed interpreter, who had been more or less engaged in negotiating with the Natives ever since the awards were made, either for lease or purchase of them by private contract, published a notice immediately after my arrival, offering lands of certain Natives, in 400-acre blocks, to the public. I found, moreover, that he had promised the Natives a higher price than the Government could afford to pay, and judged that an open competition would be fatal to the views of the Government, more particularly so after the decided demand made by the Superintendent of the Province of Wellington for a particular block. For portions of this special block, perhaps forty different applications were made, all at higher rates than I felt it wise to give. By withholding allotment, a large quantity fell into my hands at 10s. an acre, the price I determined not to exceed if possible. Turner's lease, I knew, had been handed to Mr. Woon, to procure a confirmation of it by a fresh deed from the Natives. The entire control over the people interested therein lay with Hata Rio, and to him I had promised (previous to the Superintendent making application for the land) that the block should be laid off, embracing the ten interests in one part.

Hata Rio refused to sell to the Government, alleging a grievance, and to my view honorably refused, without consent of the lessee, which was denied. There was nothing in my original instructions that would lead me to suppose the Government desired to possess every inch of these awards; on the contrary, until the Superintendent of Wellington made application for the 8,352-acre block on north-west bank of Waitotara, I did not imagine the Government would deal largely in purchasing. The idea of buying up the claims originated in a measure with myself, and the principal advantage I looked to gain was saving of expense of surveys and issue of Crown grants. The great hostility displayed by the Wairoa settlers to return of the Natives was another incentive; and the Commissioner of Confiscated Lands always urged upon me the desirability of clearing the district of these claims, pointing out that he had urged repeatedly upon the Government the necessity of making good the awards, and thus getting rid of their floating character.

The scheme of selection and locality was carefully debated with the Commissioner, and decided on by us for what appeared sound reasons.

I found, as before stated, that private interests would press severely upon my operations, and in place of opposing I determined to utilize the movements of the opposition, and make them serve the interests of the Government. I contend that I have done this effectually, and placed the entire block (with the exception of a few hundred acres) that was specially desirable by the Superintendent at the disposal of the Government, at a very much less cost than my instructions would have warranted my incurring.

I claim, moreover, to have given entire satisfaction to the Natives, who, by the apparent liberty of action given them, were prevented from continuing the charge that the Government did not give them their lands because it desired to monopolize them for its own purposes.

I have been charged indirectly with having had some private interest in dealing with these lands other than was compatible with due fulfilment of my duty to the Government. This I most indignantly deny; and if the Government entertain any such opinion after the explanation tendered by me, I respectfully submit that I am entitled to an inquiry.

I construe my instructions to be such as would be given to any confidential agent intrusted with the execution of a delicate and important duty, and which called especially for the exercise of entire faith on the part of the principals towards their agent. I based my action entirely upon the theory laid down by me of the nature of the task given me, and by the correctness or otherwise of