

I am sorry to report that the opposition to the establishment of schools continues unabated. In February last I visited Little River, for the purpose of inducing the Natives to sanction the erection of a school on their reserve; but though it was clearly explained that the Government would bear all the expense, and give their children free education, they refused to give standing room for the buildings, and this in spite of the earnest remonstrance of the Hon. Wi Katene, who accompanied me. Acting upon a suggestion made by the Natives, I applied to His Honor the Superintendent to allow the erection of the buildings on a road reserve; but though this could not be, His Honor kindly offered to purchase a site if a suitable one could be obtained, but up to this date I have not succeeded in meeting with one. My efforts to establish a school at Aowhenua were equally unsuccessful. I was told, in reply to the offers made, that the Government never thought of educating their children till they put in a claim for compensation for the nonfulfilment of the Land Purchase Commissioners' promises. They characterized the favour now offered as an attempt to prejudice their claim. They said that the places where schools were established would receive less, when the compensation was divided, than places where they had never been. It was useless to remind them that the advantages of education had been urged upon them for at least twelve years, and that the statement that the education of their children had been wilfully neglected till now was untrue.

The Natives are so thoroughly imbued with the idea that they will obtain a large sum of money from the Assembly, as compensation for the non-establishment of schools immediately after the cession of the land, that they will not listen to any contradiction of their opinions. It is greatly to be hoped that some final settlement may speedily be made of these floating claims.

The feeling is becoming very general in favour of the individualization of the reserves. The independence of tribal interference enjoyed by the Kaiapoi grantees is an object of envy to the residents on all the other reserves yet unindividualized. The incessant squabbles that keep every Native community in a perpetual state of commotion and disquietude are, in most instances, due to disputes arising out of the joint proprietorship in land. It is only the cost of surveying that deters the Natives from subdividing and allotting their reserves. Considering how great a boon it would be to them, and how comparatively small the cost of accomplishing the work, it would seem a wise and generous course for the Government to undertake it.

The health of the Natives has been on an average with that of past years, and they have enjoyed a singular freedom from the epidemic sore throats which have proved so fatal to Europeans here; but in spite of the general healthiness, the census reveals a steady decrease in the numbers.

There is some difficulty in administering relief to the sick and aged in such a manner as to secure to them the full benefit of the assistance rendered by the Government. It is found that food cannot be safely trusted to their friends, whose shameless greediness would rob them of what was intended for their support. Hitherto, with one or two exceptions, relief has been confined to gifts of clothing, and this winter many an old Maori will bless the Government for the blanket which covers him.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Minister for Native Affairs, Wellington.

JAMES W. STACK.