

1875.

NEW ZEALAND.

NATIVE LAND PURCHASE AGENTS,

(CORRESPONDENCE RELATIVE TO THE EMPLOYMENT OF).

Return to an Order of the House of Representatives, dated 29th July, 1875,

"That there be laid upon the table of the House copies of all correspondence between Colonel McDonnell and the Hon. the Native Minister or any other Officer of the Government having relation to the employment of Mr. Brissenden as Land Purchase Agent in the North of Auckland, or to the removal of Colonel McDonnell from a similar position in the same part of the colony; and of all correspondence and papers showing the nature of the instructions given to Mr. Brissenden, and of his employment, duties, and proceedings thereunder."—(*Sir George Grey.*)

No. 1.

Lieut.-Colonel McDONNELL to the Hon. Dr. POLLEN.

SIR,—

Auckland, 10th July, 1872.

I have the honor to report, for the information of the Government, that in accordance with instructions I received from Mr. Clarke, the Civil Commissioner, I proceeded from Auckland to the Waimate, and from thence to Ottawa, to make inquiries respecting the block of land named Waokū offered for sale to the Government by Hori Puatata, Wiremu Pore, and other chiefs.

I arrived at Ottawa on the 25th June—a settlement on the Taheke, a branch of the Hokianga River. I held a meeting with the Natives; and the following morning I left with five guides, who were to show me over the country. About two miles from the settlement we entered the bush, travelled all day in the rain, and camped at night-fall, wet, tired, and hungry. The weather was of the worst description; and had it not been that we were fortunate enough to meet with and kill a wild cow, the fat of which I made the Natives burn for a fire, as there was no wood near that we could get to kindle, I doubt if we could have moved the next day from cramp and the exposure, as we had neither blankets nor other covering except what we stood in.

We passed a miserable night: in the morning the Natives had decided to return. It would have been useless to proceed if even I had been able; so we returned to the village, which we reached on the evening of the following day. I again conversed with the chiefs, and offered to go out again in a few days when the weather moderated, and if they could procure food. This they declined doing, as they were busily engaged in fitting-up a large house, intended for the reception of other Natives, who were to take part in a "hahunga," or disinterment of bones; but they proposed that I should return in the summer months, when they would go over the block and point out all the boundaries to me. From what I could see and judge of the country, I make the following remarks:—

1. It is all forest land, comprising kauri, totara, rimu, matai, and other useful timber.
2. The nature of the country is rough and mountainous in some places, and undulating in others.
3. The soil is of excellent quality, being a rich chocolate-coloured loam, that would grow any farm produce.
4. As to the position and the probable extent.—The land is on the Mangakahia stream, which runs into the Wairoa River. I should judge the eastern boundary to be four or five miles to the westward of Maonganui, the mountains on the coast. The southern boundary commences about seven miles in a straight line from Ottawa, running inland over the wooded range. The acreage is, as far as I could judge, about 35,000 acres.
5. I am inclined to think there will be little or no dispute as to ownership, unless old Parore makes a claim. I spoke to the chief Mohi Tawhai, and with the Native member for the North, Wiremu Katene, as to the ownership, and these chiefs seemed to think that those who have offered the land for sale have a good claim.

6. As I have not been over the land I can say nothing for certain as to the best line of road, or the most convenient sea-post or outlet, as it is forest country, surrounded by forest on all sides. Before a reliable opinion can be given it must be thoroughly explored in fine weather.

7. Its fitness for emigration purposes.—This will in a great measure depend on the approaches that can be got to it, but I think a road could be made from Ottawa and the Taheke. From the latter place water carriage is to be had to Hokianga; a road might also be had to it from the Bay of Islands.

1—G. 7.