

As to this matter of excessive rental, *Mr. Kerr* would wish to give an example. There were cases in which a rental of £33 per annum was being paid for twenty-one years for a piece of land which, at ordinary rates for Government town sections, would be purchased in fee simple for £12 10s.

With reference to all this, *Hon. Mr. Gisborne* said that, so far as he had been able to ascertain, the reserve in question had been vested in the Governor under the Native Reserves Act of 1856, and that, if so, the Governor would have power to deal with it independent of the action of any individual Natives; that there appeared to be very little doubt that the case was in a most unsatisfactory condition at present; and that, as had been represented, it would probably be for the benefit of the Natives themselves, as much as for the benefit of the lessees, that the rents should be lowered, and a guarantee given of right of renewal or value for improvements; as otherwise it was probable that the improvements would be allowed to fall into decay, and the land would come back into the hands of the Natives as barren as it was originally. Hoped, therefore, that some measure will be devised by which such a deplorable result as this may be obviated—some measure which will be fair to those who lease the land, as well as to those for whom it is held in trust; and will bring the matter under the notice of the Native Minister and the Premier on return to Wellington, but think that your members should not fail to also bring it directly under the notice of the House of Assembly at its next meeting.

Deputation then thanked *Hon. Mr. Gisborne* for his patient consideration of the difficult subject submitted to him, and withdrew.

For the *Hon. the Native Minister*.—An early settlement of this important question is highly advisable in the interests of the public at Greymouth and of the Natives concerned.—*W. GISBORNE*.—19th September, 1879.

No. 2.

The *Hon. W. GISBORNE* to the *Hon. the PREMIER*.

(Telegram.)

Greymouth, 3rd September, 1879.

DEPUTATION of Greymouth inhabitants saw me respecting Native reserve which comprises three-fourths of town. Present state of question very unsatisfactory. Reserve was made, I understand, in original purchase, and afterwards brought under some Act of 1856, to be dealt with for benefit of Natives concerned by Governor in Council. It appears that *Mr. Alexander Mackay*, as delegate, has had for several years, and has now, despotic power to deal with this reserve personally, without any publicity or public auction. The rents are now very high, the leases are comparatively short, there is no right of renewal, and no consideration for improvements, which are, in some cases, very valuable. The effect may be, in some cases, to throw back part of the reserve, comparatively useless, to Natives, and in other cases to injure European inhabitants. The whole question, on grounds of public policy, and for interests of Natives, should be speedily put on better and fairer footing. I think, as far as I can at present form an opinion, either that the Government should, by liberal payment, buy out Native claims, and deal with land under ordinary land laws; or authorize land to be publicly sold by auction, with valuation of improvements reserved, for benefit of Natives; or that some means should be devised that land should be dealt with in a fair, open manner, with due regard to all interests. The first plan seems to me the best; failing that, the second seems next; and then, as an alternative, the third one of the three seems indispensable. I make no reflection on *Mr. Mackay*, who, I believe, is an able, energetic, and conscientious officer; but the present system, under which he acts, appears to me intrinsically vicious. Would you kindly look into the whole matter, and consult with Native Minister, in order that some speedy settlement of this very unsatisfactory and important public question may be attained?

The *Hon. the Premier*, Wellington.

W. GISBORNE.

No. 3.

The *Hon. Mr. GISBORNE* at GREYMOUTH.

DEPUTATION of the Borough Council, introduced by His Worship the Mayor (*R. Nancarrow, Esq.*), as to Claim for Subsidy from Native Trust towards cost of Borough Works.

Claim for Subsidy from Native Trusts towards Cost of Borough Works.

Mr. Nancarrow said that this was a grievance of old standing; that some years ago the Native Commissioner, *Mr. Alexander Mackay*, promised to give a subsidy towards the maintenance of the streets; that he had done so for some time, but latterly had discontinued paying it, and was now some £700 or £800 in arrears. The promise was a verbal one—to give a subsidy of 10 per cent. on the income derived from the Native Reserve within the Borough of Greymouth; and this income was about £3,000 a year. Chief portion of borough expenditure was for works within the Native estate; and although they, of course, got rates from such portions of it as were occupied, there was a considerable area unoccupied, which was held to be exempt from rates, being in the possession of His Excellency the Governor on behalf of the Natives.

After some conversation, the *Hon. Mr. Gisborne* said that he would bring the subject under the notice of the Native Minister, with the view of some arrangement being come to. He thought it was only fair the Natives should contribute something towards the maintenance of the property from which they derived such a large revenue.

The Mayor having thanked *Mr. Gisborne* for his courtesy, the deputation withdrew.

For the *Hon. the Native Minister*.—Would you kindly inquire into this matter? It seems only fair that unoccupied Native land within a borough should either be rateable, or that the Native Trust owners should pay a fair contribution instead.—*W. GISBORNE*.—20th September, 1879.