

No. 14.

FURTHER REPORT of Mr. MACKAY to Hon. Mr. SHEEHAN as to Causes of Discontent among the Natives.

New Plymouth, 14th April, 1879.

IN accordance with your request, I beg to report as follows on the question of confiscated lands from the River Waitotara on the south to Parininihi (the White Cliffs) on the north.

For the purposes of the present memorandum, and for convenience of reference, I propose to divide the territory included within those limits into three districts; namely,—

Northern District, commencing at Pukearuhe on the north, and terminating at the River Hangatahua on the south;

Central District, commencing at the River Hangatahua on the North, and terminating at the River Waingongoro on the south;

Southern District, commencing at the River Waingongoro on the north, and terminating at the River Waitotara on the south.

The lands comprised within the above-mentioned districts were all included in the Proclamations issued in accordance with the provisions of the New Zealand Settlements Acts, and were thereby confiscated to the Crown, excepting only those portions which had been acquired by purchase from the Natives.

I will now proceed briefly to describe the condition of each division or district, and will subsequently endeavour to show the causes of the discontent and disaffection which at present exist among the majority of the Maori population of the Provincial District of Taranaki.

The Northern District is the portion of the Province of Taranaki which was first occupied by European settlers. The lands included within its limits are of two classes: those purchased from the Natives before the war, and the pieces subsequently acquired by confiscation. The Native holdings are reserves made at time of sale to the Crown, lands awarded to loyal Natives by the Compensation Court, lands set aside for surrendered or returned rebels, or which they have been allowed to settle on:

The Central District is composed of lands acquired by confiscation only. The Native holdings are the Stoney River and Opunake Blocks, which have been surrendered to them by the Crown, and the Parihaka, which they have occupied without the consent of the Government.

The Southern District was acquired by confiscation. The lands occupied by Natives are either awards of the Compensation Court, or blocks reserved for the use of surrendered rebels. The land question here is, on the whole, in a more satisfactory and defined condition than that which obtains in the Northern and Central Districts.

I find the Natives throughout the Provincial District of Taranaki to be, with very few exceptions, highly discontented and disaffected towards the Government. In travelling through the district I have carefully and patiently inquired as to the causes of their estrangement, and have arrived at the conclusion that the following are the principal reasons:—

1. That the chief and prophet Te Whiti has obtained sufficient ascendancy over their minds to induce them to firmly believe that their lands will be wrested from the Europeans by supernatural agency.

2. That Natives who had been loyal throughout the war, and received awards of land from the Compensation Court, have not yet been able to receive the full benefit of such awards: in consequence, in some instances, of not being able to select land in accordance with the Court certificate which they hold, and in others, where the land has been taken up and occupied by them, they have not received the Crown grants in respect thereof, and which they are duly entitled to.

3. That the reserves made for surrendered or returned rebels have not been subdivided, and no guarantee has been given as to the future issue of titles to the occupants.

4. That, where lands have been surrendered by the Crown, the abandonment has not been legally effected in accordance with the provisions of the New Zealand Settlements Acts, which require a formal relinquishment by Proclamation. My attention was particularly directed to the cases of Stoney River and Opunake Blocks, in the Central District, the Natives stating that they cannot obtain any title from the Crown, and their applications to have their claims investigated and determined by the Native Land Court have been ignored or refused.

5. That Natives in the Southern District have been placed on lands specially reserved for them, but, when they desired to lease portions of such reserves, they were informed by a Government officer there that the holdings in question were the property of the Crown, and that they were only in occupation on sufferance.

6. That a large portion of the lands in the Northern and Central Districts have been purchased from the Natives claiming the same, notwithstanding that the bulk of them were included within the Proclamations made under the provisions of the New Zealand Settlements Act. That various offers have been made by officers of the Government to Natives claiming lands at and adjacent to the Waimate Plains, to pay them a gratuity or bonus (*takoha*) for all lands taken and retained by the Government. This action, coupled with negotiations entered into with Te Whiti and others respecting roads, telegraph lines, and the site of the proposed lighthouse at Cape Egmont, has led them to assume that the Government have waived their claims to the land through confiscation.

7. The Natives are perfectly acquainted with the fact that Mr. Parris received instructions to pay them a sum not exceeding 5s. per acre for lands taken or retained by the Government. They also lay considerable stress on the fact that he offered them the whole of the lands between the Waingongoro and Inaha Streams. (This land has now been surveyed with the remainder of the Waimate Plains.) It may be true that, because this offer was not accepted, it, from a European point of view, lapsed. That rule, however, is not easy to apply to Natives, who do not understand the meaning of an offer "without prejudice," and who look on any tender made to them as an admission of their right—at any rate to the extent of such offer—and consider they can at any time demand the fulfilment of it.