

1890.
NEW ZEALAND.

PUBLIC PETITIONS A TO L COMMITTEE

(REPORT OF) ON THE PETITION OF H. K. HOVELL, OF SUNDAY ISLAND, TOGETHER
WITH EVIDENCE GIVEN BY CAPTAIN FAIRCHILD ON THE CONDITION OF THE
SETTLERS ON SUNDAY ISLAND.

Brought up 31st July 1890, and ordered to be printed.

REPORT.

THE petitioner alleges that, by the Surveyor-General's printed report on the Kermadec Islands, he was induced to become the lessee of Run No. 7, Sunday Island; that he has since discovered the report to be exaggerated and misleading; and that, through his reliance upon the accuracy of the report, he has been involved in loss to the value of £850.

He prays for payment of this sum.

I am directed to report that, in the opinion of the Committee, the petitioner has no claim against the colony.

31st July, 1890.

A. P. SEYMOUR, Chairman.

EVIDENCE GIVEN BY CAPTAIN FAIRCHILD ON THE CONDITION OF THE SETTLERS ON SUNDAY ISLAND.

TUESDAY, 26TH AUGUST, 1890.

Captain FAIRCHILD in attendance and examined.

1. *The Chairman.*] Can you give us any information as to the state in which certain persons are left at Denham Bay as regards provisions?—They are left in a very bad state, but it serves them right; it is their own fault. They only had 2cwt. of flour among thirteen of them.

2. You took a good many of them away, did you not?—I took off thirteen, and I left thirteen. When I found they were not all coming away, and that they were short of provisions, before leaving I called them all together, and told them that the Government had sent the boat to their relief; that if she went away without them there was no guarantee for her returning; that if they did not come away with me the fault of what might take place would be theirs; but they said they would wait, in order to make the Government pay compensation.

3. But you did take some away?—Yes, I took thirteen, and left thirteen.

4. How much provisions do you say they had?—Two hundredweight of flour; but there were 15,000 mutton-birds. The prospect of living on mutton-birds is not perhaps very inviting, but there was no fear of their starving.

5. Do you propose to go there again in November?—Yes; we have dépôts for the relief of shipwrecked sailors on the uninhabited islands about there which we visit once a year. November will be the time for visiting them again.

6. Is there a possibility of their communicating with Mr. Bell on the other side of the island?—Yes; there is a road, and they can communicate with Bell. Bell has promised to give them kumaras and potatoes. He has given them all they want. He told them when they wanted anything to come to his plantation. If the whole of them had remained behind there might be some difficulty; but now that the half of them have come away, I think those that remain can rely on the mutton-birds and Bell's kumaras and potatoes.

7. Then you do not think there is any danger of any of them starving?—They said to me when I was coming away, "Oh, we can hold out with the mutton-birds till you come again." But I told them, "If you do stop here it is your own fault." They said they would stop.

8. Is there good fishing there?—Yes; but it is a very stormy place. You could fish a good many more days of the year in New Zealand than you can there. There is one place where they can fish off the rocks. Besides, the island is full of birds other than mutton-birds; they could live on these when they had done with the mutton-birds.

9. Bananas: have they bananas?—Bananas, well, you think they are good until you see the Fiji bananas. They cannot grow bananas; the land is not good enough. You may ask, "Then, how is it that Bell can grow kumaras?" But the fact is that Bell has got the only bit of cultivable land there is in the place. The island is a pumice-stone bed, where it is impossible for a man to live any longer than while he consumes the food he carries with him.