

8. That such plans, if necessary, should have been prepared and provided by the said Native claimants, and that they had had a year within which to prepare and provide such plans, and get up all necessary evidence to establish their claims, but neglected to do so.

9. That the said Native chief, Hiko, who fully understands the details of the said matter and the rights of the Natives in the said lake is a very infirm and old man.

10. That since the purchase of the above rights by the said Government certain Natives have proved obstructive, and taken steps to prevent the lake being opened and kept open.

11. That if the matter is not inquired into before the death of the said Hiko your petitioners verily believe that great and serious difficulties will arise in investigating the said claims, and great and permanent injustice and injury be done to your petitioners.

12. That if the said lake be opened and kept open 10,000 acres, more or less, of good and valuable land, the property of your petitioners and others, fit both for pastoral and agricultural purposes, will be opened up, but which is now almost entirely useless and unfit for occupation.

13. That the opening of the said lake will be of great benefit to your petitioners and others in particular, and to the said Wairarapa district generally.

Your petitioners therefore humbly pray: (1.) That your honourable House will take immediate steps to have the above matters inquired into, and to guard against the injustice and injury which may otherwise be done to your petitioners, owing to the obstruction of a few opposing Natives. (2.) That your honourable House will further take immediate steps to enable your petitioners to have the said lake opened and kept open. (3.) That your honourable House will generally cause to be done all such other acts, matters, and other things as to your honourable House may seem most advisable and expedient in the matter.

And your petitioners will ever pray, &c.

PETER HUME.

DONALD SINCLAIR.

JOHN HUME, and 18 others.

No. 21.—REPORT on the PETITION of PETER HUME and other European Inhabitants of the Wairarapa.

THIS petition is from certain European settlers in the Wairarapa who own lands injuriously affected by the overflowing of the Wairarapa Lake. They state that about two years ago the Government purchased the fishing-rights in the said lake from the Natives, who were understood to be the owners, but that since then certain other Natives have preferred claims and petitioned Parliament. The petitioners further set forth that the Native Affairs Committee of last session recommended that the Natives last mentioned and others should be allowed an opportunity of proving their claims, and go on to state that, pursuant to this recommendation, an investigation was commenced, but had to be adjourned for reasons not satisfactory to the petitioners. Petitioners allege that a Native named Hiko is thoroughly acquainted with the title to the lake, and that his evidence ought to be taken, but they allege that he is now an old infirm man, and they fear that if his evidence is not shortly taken great difficulty will arise in investigating the matter. Petitioners therefore pray that the inquiry may be expedited; and, further, that immediate steps may be taken to keep the lake open so that their property may not be injured by the overflow of the water of the lake.

I am directed to report as follows: That it appears from the evidence of one of the petitioners, Mr. Hume, that serious injury is caused to certain settlers in the Wairarapa by the yearly overflowing of the Wairarapa Lake, and that the evil cannot be abated without infringing the fishing-rights of the Native owners, which are alleged to have been retained or preserved in the original deed of cession. That it further appears that about two years ago a purchase of the lake and of the fishing-rights therein was made by the Government; but as it seemed on inquiry by the Native Affairs Committee of last session that the whole of the Natives interested had not an opportunity of being heard in support of their claims, that Committee recommended as follows: "That the Committee are satisfied from the evidence they have taken that the majority of the owners of the lake have not joined in the sale, and they are of opinion that it would have been better that the title should have been investigated by the Native Land Court previous to the completion of the purchase; and the Committee are further of opinion that the petitioners and other Natives who may allege a claim ought to have an opportunity of proving their title, if they are able to do so, before the Native Land Court." It now appears that obstructions to the inquiry were made by the persons in whose favour the recommendation of the Committee of last session was made. Your Committee can only now express an opinion that the inquiry ought to be expedited, and the grievance complained of by both parties settled with the least possible delay.

29th October, 1877.

JOHN BRYCE, Chairman.

No. 22.—(TRANSLATION.)

Papawai, 20th February, 1878.

To JOHN SHEEHAN and HOANI NAHE, Ministers of Native Affairs.

FRIENDS, we, the undersigned, consent and agree to all the conditions stated to us by you to-day relative to the Wairarapa Lakes in the manner following: (1.) We agree that the mouth of the lake shall be opened on the lake being flooded. (2.) We agree that the Native Minister and the Native Committee of Wairarapa shall appoint the time for the opening of the lake on such occasions. (3.) We agree to refer the whole question relative to the lakes and their boundaries as set forth in the deeds of purchase of the land abutting the lakes. (4.) We also consent to proceed to Wellington on being requested to do so to view the papers and deeds of sale of the aforesaid lands. (5.) We solicit