

and send a deputation to confer with the Government in Wellington on the matter before the session begins. I do not know that I can say any more than I have already said. It does appear to me that the settlers should consider the matter very carefully in the light of what is an accurate arrangement with the Natives, which would be most desirable to get the land of the Natives quite apart from Te-Whiti-ism altogether. If the desire is to get the lands back to place them under the mana of Te Whiti, I am with you. I do not think it is desirable to take it from the Public Trustee at all. If you can arrive at equitable leases, I think the Public Trustee can manage it with satisfaction to himself and to the Natives.—(Hear, hear.)—The Natives complained that the Public Trustee was not punctual in paying the rents. If there has been any want of punctuality in the past, I can give you my word that will not be so in the future. Anything that has taken place in the past in the way of a grievance is not likely to take place in the future. As to the Natives, they put forth unreasonable demands this morning; but I think I convinced them that they were unreasonable, and ought not to be pursued. As to yourselves, all you want is fair rents, permanent tenure, and to know where you are—(Hear, hear)—and, having due regard to the rights of the Natives, the Government will do all they possibly can to place you in that position. That is the intention of the Government, and we will assist you as far as we possibly can, keeping in view what is due to the Natives as well as the settlers. I have called this meeting in order to put the case fully before you, and in order that the Government may know the minds of the settlers, and that they may hear from the Government what their opinion is upon this question. We have not been able to place definite propositions before you, for the simple reason that we are not in a position to do so, and the parties have not agreed. You know the complications that have taken place; and it is impossible for the Government to get rid of all those complications at once. The Act of 1887 embarrassed the position; the judgment of the Supreme Court also embarrassed the position; and the Act of 1884 is a dead-letter as far as improvements are concerned. We have therefore to begin *de novo*; and the only way of beginning with this matter is to bring the parties together, hear what they have to say, and then proceed on the basis of equity. That appears to me to be the only course that can be taken on the subject. I may thank you, gentlemen, I suppose, for coming here to-day; it is all in your own interests. It will have given me real and great pleasure to have met you if any good result should follow from this meeting.

Mr. Riddiford: There is one question. In the event of our not arranging with the Natives, what will follow then, if the Maoris will not discuss the question?

Hon. the Premier: I think you should still continue to consider the matter as to what should be done in the way of legislation. What the Natives do or do not do should not, I think, embarrass your action, and prevent you from arriving at some conclusion as to what course you will pursue. Take your own line of action, and take steps to advance your own interests. It is for the Government to then meet you. The Government should not be guided altogether by what either the settlers or the Natives do. Arrive at some agreement if you can; if not, take your own line.

Mr. W. Symes: I would thank the Hon. the Premier most sincerely for the trouble he has taken and the courtesy he has shown in the matter.

Hon. the Premier: I thank you very heartily, sir.

The proceedings then terminated, having lasted till 4.10 p.m.

No. 5.

Mr. P. WILSON to the Hon. the PREMIER.

SIR,—

I have the honour to inform you that at a general meeting of West Coast lessees held in Patea on the 20th January, after their conference with you, a certain resolution was carried, a copy of which is herewith enclosed.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. J. Ballance, Wellington.

PERCIVAL WILSON,
Secretary, West Coast Lessees.

Enclosure.

GENERAL MEETING of WEST COAST LESSEES, held in Patea on the 20th January.

Present: Messrs. Lysaght, Davidson, Walter Wilson, Law, McGregor, B. Lysaght, F. Lysaght, Buchanan, Bailey, Siggs, A. Symes, W. Symes, C. Durie, T. H. Nicholson, Balmsforth, Turner, Pearce, J. Durie, Gallagher, G. Newland, P. Wilson, F. Riddiford, Hobbs.

Proposed by Mr. W. Symes, seconded by Mr. P. Wilson, "That the leaseholders agree to accept ordinary leases from the Public Trustee for twenty-one years, at a rental of 5 per cent. upon the land-tax valuation, less the value of any substantial dwelling-house and permanent farm-buildings, and so that where there is an unexpired term at a lower rental such lower rental should be considered in computing the new rent."—Carried.

No. 6.

Mr. A. WILLIS to Mr. P. WILSON, Waverley.

SIR,—

Premier's Office, Wellington, 30th January, 1892.

I have been directed by the Hon. the Premier to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 27th instant, covering a resolution passed at a meeting of the West Coast lessees at Patea on the 20th, agreeing to accept leases from the Public Trustee for twenty-one years, at a rental of 5 per cent. upon the land-tax valuation, &c. I am to ask you to convey the Premier's thanks to the lessees for the resolution, and to say that the matter will be duly considered.

I have, &c.,

Percival Wilson, Esq., Waverley.

ALEX. WILLIS.

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