

(vii) Considering the fact that prior to 1840 the land was of very little exchangeable value, and that for very many years after 1840 it was selling at prices of 7d., 8d., 1s., and 1s. 6d., I think that the average price of 2s. 4½d. at which the “old” purchases were made was substantially more than its then value: certainly it cannot be said to have been an inadequate price. The lands were not inalienable, as the reserves would have been in the South Island case, and nothing can be more sure than that, if the surplus areas had been handed back to the Maoris in the eighteen forties, or even the sixties, they would have been promptly disposed of at prices much lower than 2s. 4½d. per acre.

127. It follows from what I have said in the last preceding paragraph that in my view the value of the 71,155 acres of “surplus lands” may be fairly estimated at not more than £8,449 13s., thus making the total value of the whole 87,582 acres £9,476 6s. 9d., but I would be prepared to add something to that amount by way of solatium, and on the whole I would recommend that a total sum of £15,000 be paid as compensation and by way of complete and final settlement of all the Maori grievances in respect of these “surplus lands.” I have endeavoured in this memorandum to dispel the confusion that has given rise to erroneous and exaggerated notions of the Maori grievances, and to explain what I regard as the real equities and broad justice of the case; and on the whole case as I see it I consider that a payment of £15,000 would give the fullest measure of justice to the Maori claims.

128. If that recommendation be adopted, I would further suggest that the compensation should be paid to an appropriate Maori Land Board (either in one sum or by instalments over a short period of years as Your Excellency’s Advisers might think fit) for Maori purposes at the discretion of the Board, but in the districts where the surplus lands are located. I am conscious that this may not be an easy task, particularly as fairly substantial portions of the surplus lands are situated near Auckland, but the probability is that the needs of the Maoris farther away from Auckland are the greater. Be that as it may, any difficulties that might arise in apportioning the money should be capable of solution if the needs of each district are recognized and the Maoris themselves are reasonable.

MICHAEL MYERS.

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