

The Ngatirangitihi Tribe offer Pokohu A Block of 6,870 acres for sale to the Crown. We quote from their memorandum submitted for our consideration the following :—

Owing to the untimely destruction of many of our villages through the Tarawera outbreak in 1886, and the deterioration of our lands, the late Mr. Ballance, then Native Minister, caused a block of 2,000 acres, known as the Hauani Reserve, to be set apart for our use. Subsequently we were instructed to submit our list of names as owners for insertion in the title of the said land, which was done accordingly. The names of some three hundred and fifty-odd persons having been selected at general meetings of the tribe, these persons were all grouped in sub-hapus, and a Government surveyor was employed to survey the 2,000 acres into portions for each hapu according to its number, the position of each portion having first been decided by lot. Several of the hapus proceeded to occupy their respective portions, when our minds were disturbed through the Crown Lands Commissioner at Auckland demanding immediate payment of rent. We were unable to comply with this demand, and have only continued to use the reserve in a half-hearted manner in consequence, as we had been led to clearly understand that the land was to become our absolute property.

Our tribe numbers over four thousand individuals, and we are now occupying less than 200 acres of worked-out land at Matata, which is totally inadequate to provide us with food; yet we cling to the place on account of our schools, the large fish-supply, and the greater opportunities of obtaining work draining swamps, fencing for Europeans, &c.

The effect of the Tarawera eruption has in some cases greatly improved our lands in the vicinity—notably the several Pokohu Blocks; and we desire to make the following proposals, and earnestly beg your favourable consideration of the same :—

Out of Pokohu A (about 6,870 acres) we ask the Crown to accept an area of 3,000 acres as some return for the 2,000 acres at Hauani aforesaid. We offer a further area of 200 acres in exchange for a piece of about 100 acres at Tiepatua set apart for our use by the late Sir A. J. Cadman when Native Minister, and which we have been occupying ever since. The residue of the Pokohu Block we offer to the Crown in fee-simple, the proceeds to be devoted entirely to the purchase of fencing and stock, so necessary to enable us to profitably utilise Hauani.

Much of the Pokohu land is of fair quality, well adapted for the purpose of stock-raising, and there is a considerable quantity of totara and other valuable timber thereon.

The block of 2,000 acres referred to in the memorandum, known as the Hauani Reserve, is officially called Lot 63D, Parish of Matata. We are informed by the Hon. the Native Minister that this land was subdivided amongst the several hapus of the Ngatirangitihi; that legal leases were issued to them by the Commissioner of Crown Lands at Auckland under section 219 of "The Land Act, 1892." We recommend that the offer of the Ngatirangitihi be accepted by the Crown. We have had the evidence of Captain Mair, who was the agent intrusted by the Native Minister, the late Mr. Ballance, to communicate with the tribe in regard to the Hauani Reserve. He states that it was the then intention of the Native Minister to grant this reserve absolutely to the Maoris. Perhaps this intention was afterwards changed so as to preserve the reserve for the tribe. The Natives, according to the evidence adduced before us, certainly understood that the reserve was a free gift to them. Their offer now of 3,000 acres for the 2,000 acres is therefore under the circumstances a generous proposal, and as the reserve can be made, and ought to be set aside for Maori occupation, there will be no opportunity for them to either sell or lease it. Their offer also of 200 acres for the 100 acres granted to them is a generous one, and should be accepted.

The balance of this Pokohu A Block should be purchased by the Crown, at a valuation to be ascertained by some disinterested and competent valuer. The owners are willing that the money received from the sale should be disbursed for the purpose of fencing and stocking the Hauani Reserve, and this can be arranged by the Native Department. We recommend that the block be incorporated, so that the arrangement may be carried out more expeditiously.

We have the honour to be

Your Excellency's humble and obedient servants,

ROBERT STOUT,
A. T. NGATA,
Commissioners.