

4. BOARDS OF MANAGEMENT.

The death of Colonel Wakefield, the Company's Principal Agent, was announced in the *New Munster Gazette* of the 21st September, 1848. His last official act had been to bring to a successful conclusion the adjustment of many differences between the Company and its settlers. A tribute to his memory was paid by Sir George Grey, who said that "he not only possessed abilities of a very high order, but his whole attention and thoughts were directed to the single subject of the advancement of the interests of the country."⁽¹⁾

Mr. Alexander McDonald acted as agent for the reserves at Nelson until January, 1845, when he gave up the trust, apparently in view of the fact that the Native Trust Ordinance was expected to come into operation. From then onwards no one appears to have been in charge until 1848, when the Superintendent of Nelson drew the Colonial Secretary's attention to the unsatisfactory state of the trust, and pointed out that rents were due, lands were lying waste, and the Native hostelries were fast crumbling to ruins.⁽²⁾ This led to the establishment of Boards of Management, and in June, 1848, Messrs. Poynter, Carkeek, and Tinline were appointed to manage the reserves in the Nelson district.⁽³⁾

In Wellington Mr. Henry St. Hill had continued to act as agent for the country reserves, and had gradually assumed control of the town lands, which he administered until June, 1848, when Lieutenant-Governor Eyre appointed Colonel McCleverty, and Mr. D. Wakefield, the Attorney-General, to act with him as a Board of Management.⁽⁴⁾

In a memorandum referring to the reserves, Lieutenant-Governor Eyre stated that—

"It was originally intended to place the New Zealand Company's reserves under the management of trustees, who, without the power of alienation, might make such arrangements for letting or leasing them as would secure the largest pecuniary return, and this return was to be devoted entirely to objects connected with the general welfare, advancement, and improvement of the Native race.

"The trustees who were nominated, however, gradually ceased to act at all, and in the meantime many partial arrangements had been entered into with settlers for the occupation of portions of reserves, but, as these arrangements were not legally binding, the agreements were either kept or not, as best suited the interests of the occupants, and very few rents were paid. As this state of things had continued for a considerable length of time, it seemed absolutely necessary that the Government should at once take the matter in hand and endeavour to turn the reserves to some profitable account. The best way of doing this appears to be by appointing local Boards of Management, under whose inquiries and recommendations the Government can carry out the necessary details. It is essential that the Government should retain in their own hands all control over the reserves, because circumstances have made it desirable that in some instances total alienation of the lands should be sanctioned, as for ordinance purposes, or to provide sites for hospitals, for churches, for public offices, or for other similar indispensable objects of general and public utility, the Government having no land left them in the Province of New Munster available for such important and available purposes. Nor will any injustice be done to the Natives by this arrangement, for already, in order to meet their wishes or requirements, or to adjust disputes relative to land, the Government have given up to them 100 acres reserved as a domain, have purchased also additional sections of land in eligible localities, and have paid considerable sums to parties occupying Native reserves to quit them in order that such reserves might be given over to the use and possession of the Natives themselves; in addition also to which the Government have expended considerable sums in promoting objects or institutions calculated to advance the welfare and interests of the Native race generally, such as building hospitals, &c.

"It may fairly be assumed, therefore, that it would only be reasonable and just that the Government, having done so much for the Natives, and being left without any lands whatever to appropriate to public objects, should reimburse themselves from the lands originally set apart as reserves to be formed for the benefit of the Natives. Already many instances have unavoidably occurred in which the original intention of the reserves has necessarily been departed from; some have been given up to the Natives themselves, some have been exchanged for other lands, and some have been appropriated in other ways equally unavoidable from the circumstances of the colony and the anomalous position of a Government in a new colony without an acre of land at its disposal for the most important public purposes.

"It must be remembered, too, that since the original plan of Native reserves was first brought into operation many and large additional blocks of land not then contemplated have been given over to the Natives. It is proposed, therefore, in all cases where the Government find it necessary, for purposes of public utility or to promote the general advantage, to appropriate any of the reserves that such portions of them should be taken as may be required for the object in view, and that the Native Reserve Fund should be compensated by the Government, allowing a fair and reasonable rate of purchase-money for the land taken."⁽⁵⁾

(1) Governor Grey to Earl Grey: Great Britain—Papers relating to New Zealand, 1849.

(2) Superintendent of Nelson to Colonial Secretary, 18/2/48: Mackay's Compendium, Vol. 2, p. 273.

(3) Superintendent of Nelson to Board of Management of Native Reserves at Nelson, 7/7/48: Mackay's Compendium, Vol. 2, p. 276.

(4) *New Munster Gazette*, Vol. 1, No. 12, p. 65, 12th June, 1848.

(5) Memorandum relative to the Native Reserves by Lieut.-Governor Eyre, 23/6/48: Mackay's Compendium, Vol. 2, p. 278.