

No. 17.

Copy of a Letter from His Honor D. McLEAN to the Hon. J. C. RICHMOND.

SIR,—

Napier, 23rd November, 1868.

I have the honor to enclose the copy of a letter from Mr. Hamlin, by which it will be perceived that Major Lambert has prevented an important movement from being undertaken against the enemy from the Wairoa, by preventing Mr. Hamlin from taking the necessary steps with the Wairoa Chiefs to go with the Tuparoas.

I would urge upon the Government the necessity of preventing a recurrence of such interference on the part of Major Lambert.

It must be obvious to the Government that a strict or stereotyped adherence to instructions given at one time may be fatal to success, and that instructions, like the tactics of the enemy, must be liable to change from time to time as circumstances require.

I would therefore urge upon the Government the necessity of giving the officers on this coast instructions that they are, at least during a time when important operations are being conducted, to take their orders direct from me, otherwise I fear that divided authority must lead to disasters that even yet may be averted.

The Hon. J. C. Richmond, Wellington.

I have, &c.,

DONALD McLEAN.

Enclosure in No. 17.

Copy of a Letter from Mr. F. E. HAMLIN to His Honor D. McLEAN.

SIR,—

Napier, 22nd November, 1868.

I have the honor to report to you on my last visit to Wairoa, which according to instructions was to organise an expedition, chiefly of Ngatiporou stationed at Wairoa.

On arriving at Wairoa, I at once proceeded to the township, delivered letters and despatches, then proceeded to consult with Chiefs. Ropata and Hotene at once expressed their willingness to join with the local friendly Natives. I then sent for Paora Te Apatu, and asked Major Lambert the favour of sending two of his Native men to collect the other Native Chiefs in order to hold a general meeting of the Chiefs.

Major Lambert replied by saying that he would like to know first what I was going to do? I replied I wished to have a general meeting, with a view of organising an expedition to take the enemy in rear. He at once replied that he would not allow me to interfere with the local Natives (*sic*)—that his instructions I had nothing to do with the local Natives (*sic*).

Ngatiporou not feeling themselves strong enough to take the field single-handed, I felt myself crippled, and after some consultation with Mr. Deighton, R.M. of that district, together with those of the friendly Chiefs I could get together, I again returned to Major Lambert, and asked him if he insisted on what he had stated previously? He replied in the affirmative, and read me a letter, dated 14th instant, from the Hon. J. C. Richmond, in support of his conduct.

I therefore felt it my duty at once to steam to Napier, and report on the subject.

I have, &c.,

His Honor D. McLean, Esq., &c., &c., Napier.

F. E. HAMLIN.

No. 18.

Copy of a Letter from the Hon. J. C. RICHMOND to His Honor D. McLEAN.

SIR,—

Wellington, 25th November, 1868.

I have the honor to acknowledge your letter of the 23rd instant, enclosing a copy of a letter from Mr. Hamlin, and complaining that Major Lambert has prevented an important movement against the enemy by his interference.

After carefully considering the facts of the case, it appears to the Government that you have fallen into an error in superseding Major Lambert in his own district by communicating important Military orders to an inferior officer without reference to him. Such a course must be fertile in misunderstanding and subversive of discipline. Whilst the Government recognises it as a necessity in times of emergency that a Commanding Officer should carry out the explicit orders of its accredited agent even at some considerable risk, and in some cases against his own better judgment, it is no less clearly due to him that he should be the prime instrument of all movements affecting the safety of his district.

It can hardly have escaped your recollection that only a few days before you had, in a telegram to the Government of the 17th November, expressed the opinion that the removal of the Ngatiporou from the Wairoa would be followed by the defection of the bulk of the Friendly Natives; probably Major Lambert shared that belief, and as you did not confide to him the grounds of your alteration of view, nor the responsibility of the movement in question, it is impossible to blame his excess of caution although the Government very much deplore the probable result.

The Government have not fettered you with inflexible instructions, and they consider the circumstances and the nature of the country require that Officers at exposed outposts should be allowed a certain discretion in the mode of carrying out operations which involve more or less danger to their command. But I feel sure that if your future instructions as to Major Lambert's district are conveyed through him and with due information as to the intent and importance of the orders, he will on his part be found ready to incur any risk that may fairly be imposed upon him in order to carry them into effect.

His Honor D. McLean.

I have, &c.,

J. C. RICHMOND.