

No. 3.

Mr. A. MACKAY, Nelson, to the UNDER SECRETARY, Native Department.

SIR,—

Nelson, 6th October, 1869.

In compliance with the terms of your minute of the 13th September, attached to a letter from the Hon. the Speaker of the Legislative Council to His Excellency the Governor, covering a resolution by that body, together with a copy of a report therein referred to, I have the honour to state for your information that, owing to the number of claims of the kind requiring attention at the hands of the Government, it will be quite impossible to get the matter arranged without incurring expense, although the expense may be very much lightened by deferring the settlement of these claims for a while longer—that is to say until the Native Lands Court goes down to Southland to hear and determine the claims to Native Reserves there.

The Court may probably hold a sitting at Southland during the ensuing autumn, judging from the last intelligence received from the chief Judge on the subject, dated 1st August, 1868; and, as I shall probably have to visit that portion of the island whenever the Court goes there, I would then undertake the settlement of these promises at the same time; perhaps it would be as well therefore that the settlement of these claims should be postponed till the Court goes down, provided the probable date should not be too distant.

With respect to the probable cost of the work, it is rather difficult to form an estimate, as it depends very much whether suitable blocks of land of any extent can be obtained contiguous to existing surveys for the location of these families, or whether it would be necessary to select individual sections in detached localities for the purpose. The expense also would be much lighter if the Survey Department in the Province in which the land may be selected would provide an officer to undertake the necessary work.

Provided large-sized blocks of land could be obtained, the land should be subdivided into individual sections, with a view to locate each family on separate allotments. This would be the most satisfactory mode of settling these people on the land, as it would prevent quarrelling amongst them in time to come.

There is very little doubt but that the General Government will have to bear the cost of the survey; it would be as well, however, that the work should be done under the supervision of the Provincial Government, as a guarantee for its satisfactory performance; and if it were possible to confine the selection of land for the purpose to one or two blocks, the probable cost of survey, I should imagine, would not exceed two hundred pounds.

As there are a number of half-caste families living near the Bluff, in Southland, and also at Stewart's Island, I would beg to recommend that land should be selected contiguous to some of the Native Reserves on the main land.

From inquiries I made when in Southland last year, I am inclined to think that a block of suitable land could be obtained in the neighbourhood of the Native Reserve at Oraka, on which the majority of the claimants residing in that Province might be located. This would be the means of disposing of the largest number of cases, leaving only a few isolated ones to be dealt with in other places.

Annexed I beg to hand you a copy of a letter addressed by me to the Native Department, dated 3rd June, 1868, on the subject of the proposed sitting of the Native Land Court at Southland, and recommending that the claims of the half-caste families to have land provided for them should be dealt with at the same time, in which I also suggest that a block of 1,000 acres should be selected near Oraka to make provision for the purpose.

I also attach a list of the half-castes alluded to therein, by which it will be perceived that there are a greater number of cases to be dealt with than was perhaps anticipated.

Whoever is required to undertake the settlement of these claims should be provided with full authority to deal with the matter in case obstacles might be thrown in the way of doing so by the Provincial authorities.

Under Secretary, Native Department,
Wellington.

I have, &c.,
ALEXANDER MACKAY,
Native Commissioner.

Enclosure 1 in No. 3.

SIR,—

Dunedin, 3rd June, 1868.

With respect to the future sitting of the Native Land Court in Southland, I would beg to point out the advisability of having the claims to Native Reserves on Stewart's Island heard at the same time; but prior to the Court sitting, and before the usual forms of application are sent in, it will be necessary to have these reserves surveyed. It would appear, however, that some of these reserves are subject to old land claims, the position of which have not as yet been defined that I am aware of, although it is possible that something may have been arranged about them, as Mr. Pearson, the Commissioner of Crown Lands, told me, when in Southland last, that he purposed visiting the island during the early part of March, for the purpose of deciding the various old land claims there; but whether or no he carried out his intention I am not in a position to say.

With regard to the survey of the reserves on Stewart's Island by the Provincial Government, I think it is probable, if the work is left in their hands, that it will not be undertaken for some time to come. The Government, I believe, contemplate making a trigonometrical survey of the island in the first place, but as the bulk of the land there is of such a character as will not induce immediate settlement, it therefore may reasonably be supposed, in the present position of the Province, that the Government will not readily acquiesce in making an expenditure of so unproductive a character as a work of the kind would entail. It will be obvious, therefore, that unless the General Government will agree to incur the expense of surveying these reserves, they must necessarily remain undefined for an indefinite period.