

2nd. To suspend the surveys, prohibit the occupation of the district by Europeans, and let time bring a cure. This clearly would have been a most losing game, leaving the Natives in possession of the whole district, and abandoning for years all hopes of its colonization.

3rdly. To effect some such compromise as has since been arrived at. The last was clearly the only course which could be wisely adopted.

Under these circumstances, the Native Minister, at the request of the Provincial authorities, personally undertook the negotiation of the question, and, after great trouble, succeeded in settling it, and removing all dissension. I have his authority for saying that if he had on that occasion failed, the result, in all human probability, would have been the indefinite postponement of quiet possession of the lands in dispute—a postponement disastrous to the interests of the Province of Wellington. Accordingly, the Native Minister, acting in good faith in the interests of the Province, availed himself of an opportunity which might not recur, and satisfactorily concluded the dispute, and in doing so he felt it necessary to make the additional reserves to which you refer, and much of which, as you admit, is land of a worthless character.

I venture to think that you have not sufficiently estimated the advantageous position in which, on a review of the whole question, the Province of Wellington is placed by the final solution of the long-pending difficulties attending this matter. The entire block purchased by you contains, by estimate of Mr. Stewart, the Sub-Provincial Surveyor, 240,000 acres. After deducting the awards made by the Court, the reserves for friendly Natives made by yourself, and those added by the Hon. Mr. McLean—say, 25,000 acres at the outside—the Province receives 215,000 out of 240,000, or about nine-tenths of the whole. As not three years ago the dissentient Ngatiraukawa claimed it all, subject only to some small deductions in behalf of the Ngatiapa, and afterwards offered, as a compromise, to take 80,000 or 90,000 acres, the result of the long-pending litigation and final adjustment cannot be regarded as disadvantageous to the Province, or as leaving the Government, and yourself its Commissioner, in other than a triumphant position in the matter; while the acquisition of the district with the friendly concurrence of the Natives, instead of at best their sulky acquiescence, is an advantage not to be lightly disregarded, and which is cheaply purchased at the price of from 10,000 to 15,000 acres of land, not all of the best quality.

Negotiations for the purchase by the Crown of Native lands, conducted as they are with persons of an uncivilized race, and attended by other exceptional difficulties, cannot be regulated by rigid rules of procedure, and if the purchases are to be made satisfactorily, or, in other words, if peaceable possession is to be secured, considerable latitude must necessarily be allowed in the conduct of those negotiations; and the Government cannot admit, so long as the purchased land is for the special benefit of a Province, that occasional additional expenses in supplementing a purchase, and securing, so to speak, the goodwill of the land, should be defrayed at the cost of the Colony, and not of the Province interested.

If, as I understand is the case, a reserve has been made by the Native Minister for the satisfaction of Native claims to land not in the block in question, but in the Seventy-Mile Bush Block, the purchase of which is under negotiation, the question connected therewith can be specially dealt with under the Fourth Part of "The Public Works and Immigration Act, 1870," relating to acquisition by the Crown of lands in the North Island.

His Honor the Superintendent, Wellington.

I have, &c.,
W. GISBORNE.