

1873.

NEW ZEALAND.

HAWKE'S BAY NATIVE LANDS ALIENATION COMMISSION ACT, 1872.

REPORTS BY CHAIRMAN OF COMMISSION, MR. JUSTICE RICHMOND.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly, pursuant to the said Act.

Notâ.—A foot-note to each Report shows that it is concurred in by Mr. Commissioner Maning, with or without qualification; or gives a reference to his separate Report on the same Case. There is a separate series of Reports on all the cases (with a few unimportant exceptions) by Commissioners Hikairo and Te Wheoro, or by Commissioner Hikairo alone. The numbers by which *Complaints* are referred to correspond with those in the *List of Complaints* forwarded by the Commissioners. Complaints heard together, and single complaints where heard separately, constitute a *Case*. The Cases are distinguished by Roman numerals. There is a separate Report upon each Case.

GENERAL REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN.

BEFORE entering upon the substantial matter of this General Report, a few preliminary statements and explanations are requisite.

The first Court of Inquiry under the Act was opened by a quorum of the Commissioners, consisting of myself, Judge Maning, and Wiremu Hikairo, on Monday, the 3rd of February last, at the Provincial Council Chamber, in the Town of Napier; due public notice having been previously given of the intention to hold the same at that time and place. Te Wheoro, the only Commissioner absent at the opening of the Court, shortly afterwards arrived at Napier; and all four Commissioners thenceforward sat together at every Court until the termination of the public sittings on Saturday, the 12th April last. No Court of Inquiry was held elsewhere than in the Town of Napier.

The Commissioners had, previously to the sitting of the Court, exercised their powers by making a few simple rules of procedure, and in conformity with these, notices were published from time to time in the Hawke's Bay Provincial Government *Gazette*, stating the substance of the complaints to be brought before the Commissioners. A list of the complaints, compiled from these *Gazettes*, is presented to Parliament. The complaints have been consecutively numbered by us, in *Arabic* numerals. These numbers are referred to in the margin of our Reports. The total number of complaints preferred is 301, exclusively of forty-nine relating to old Crown purchases, into which we were not authorized to inquire. Eight complaints were wholly or partially withdrawn. These are noted in the list of complaints presented to Parliament. Such complaints as related to the same block were generally heard together, unless the issues raised were so diverse as to make this course inconvenient. These consolidated complaints, or in some instances, where heard separately, single complaints, are referred to as "Cases." Each case is distinguished by a *Roman* numeral, and is separately reported upon. Our particular Reports deal in the whole with eighty-one complaints collected into thirty-four cases. Of the eighty-one complaints, three were dismissed as not coming within the limits of our inquiry. One was repudiated in open Court by the supposed complainant, whose name had been used without his authority.

Mr. Locke, the Resident Magistrate of the Taupo district, took upon himself, at the request of the Commissioners, the duty of making an abstract for the purpose of publication of the letters of complaint which poured in upon us. This duty he performed so efficiently, that no single exception was taken to the fairness of these abridgments. The same gentleman, and Mr. Hanson Turton, rendered us other valuable assistance in the work of the Commission. The Commissioners have also to acknowledge that the Provincial Government did everything possible to facilitate their investigations.

The proceedings of the Commission were opened by a short address delivered by myself, and translated, sentence by sentence, into Maori. A copy is laid before Parliament. The main purpose of what was said was, to impress upon the natives the fact, that the Commissioners were directed merely to inquire into and report to Parliament upon complaints, and that they were not empowered to give any decisions. We had reason to think that undue expectations were being formed of the probable results of our mission, and thought it advisable to take the earliest opportunity of moderating these hopes.

As Chairman of the Commission, I now desire to say a few words on the circumstance that the Commissioners have been unable to concur in one General Report; and, that in the Heretaunga and some