

1873.

## NEW ZEALAND.

## SETTLEMENT OF CONFISCATED LANDS,

(FURTHER REPORT ON).

*Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by command of His Excellency.*

## No. 1.

Mr. R. PHARAZYN to the UNDER SECRETARY for CROWN LANDS.

SIR,—

Confiscated Lands Office, Whanganui, 31st December, 1872.

In reply to your letter No. 633, of 25th November, 1872, in which you inform me that, with a view to reducing the expenditure on confiscated lands, my services will be dispensed with after to-day, the 31st December, 1872, and request me "to furnish full reports of my proceedings for the information of the Government, and as records for the Confiscated Lands Department," I have the honor to state that I have sent in reports from time to time, which together with the records, books, and maps of this office, contain nearly all the information it is in my power to give.

All transactions relative to land, which are actually complete, have been of course duly entered in the official Register, while monthly returns of land sold and duplicate receipts have been forwarded to the District Registrars of Wellington and Taranaki, and to your office. The total amount of cash received, and the few cases in which land has been exceptionally dealt with, I have briefly noticed in the tabular form attached to this report. In all of them the Government will have no difficulty in fulfilling promises made for good and sufficient reasons. As my connection with the Government is about to cease, I shall refrain from making any suggestions and proposals as to the future management of the West Coast District, beyond those I have lately submitted to the Government. I may however be allowed to observe, that though I believe I have effected a certain amount of good, and prevented more mischief, during my tenure of office, yet I am thoroughly aware that the administration of these lands might have been infinitely better than it has been. To quote one of my own minutes, "These lands should be settled and occupied, not used to pay off old debts as they have been, against my advice, and in spite of every effort of mine to the contrary. In theory, the policy of the Government has been a policy of settlement; but in practice, the confiscated lands on this Coast have been used to satisfy every claim which has been put forward by any interest strong enough to enforce it, with a total disregard to anything but the exigencies of the moment. The only excuse is, that the Legislature has been as reckless as the Government, and that good administration is rendered almost impossible by the political condition of the Colony." I may add, that even now there seems to be no disposition on the part of the Legislature or the Government to adopt an intelligent policy in reference to this subject. The rash proposals of politicians anxious to secure votes, and the ignorant though popular assumption that every reduction of expenditure is true economy, have resulted in bringing things to a standstill at the very time when the expenditure already incurred was becoming productive. That expenditure might have been less, and its productiveness greater, had my advice been followed from the first. As it was, the work had to be done backwards. Clearly, a general survey, and the settlement of Native claims, were the first things that should have been undertaken; the former with due regard to proper organization and the season of the year, and the latter with due regard to the officer appointed. Useful as Mr. Worgan's services have been during the past year, I am certain that had Colonel McDonnell been employed for the same purpose nearly three years ago, as I strongly urged, he would have been equally successful at far less expense to the Government, while, had the surveys been commenced at that time, the whole district would now be occupied by settlers. Instead of this course having been adopted, Native claims were allowed to lock up the land till Mr. Worgan undertook the task of freeing it, which he had no sooner begun than his proceedings were hampered by the preposterous claim of the Provincial Government of Wellington to a pre-emptive right of purchase over private Native property. I protested against this mischievous interference at the time; but, as usual, sound principle was sacrificed to political expediency, and the result has been, that both time and money have been wasted, and Europeans and Natives subjected to endless annoyances, inconvenience, and loss. Even the Provincial Government has not got what it wanted, and has only succeeded in demonstrating its unfitness to be intrusted with the administration of lands which are not absolutely free from Native complications. It was obvious from the first, that when one party derives every advantage that may accrue from unjust dealing, while another has to pay all the penalties, the ordinary restraints of prudence are absent. I only regret that the wise discretion exercised in refusing to hand these lands over to the Provincial Government was not extended to the point of refusing to permit any interference whatever.

Reviewing the past with an earnest desire to be perfectly impartial, I cannot avoid coming to the conclusion that my Department has been far less useful than it ought to have been, and that the sole cause of its comparative failure has been the passive or active resistance of the Government to my freedom of action. Had the simple and businesslike method been adopted of leaving the entire management of these lands to me, as a private person would leave the management of his estate to his steward, the result would have been very different. I am aware that this would have involved a considerable departure from what is, unfortunately for the country, the usual Ministerial and Departmental practice, of dividing individual responsibility till it is neither seen nor felt; still, in my case, I think the experiment ought to have been tried, because, in the first place, I was anxious that it should; and in the second place, because it was well known that I had not asked for Government employment, but had been especially selected by Mr. Fox and Mr. Domett, on grounds of personal fitness and identity of local interest. I accepted the office of Commissioner rather as a matter of public duty than for the sake of the salary attached to it; and, after my experience of the hopelessness of contending against official routine and a thoroughly vicious system of administrative centralization, I cannot but feel gratified at the termination of so thankless a task. While saying this, I desire at the same time to express my sense of the kind consideration with which I have been invariably treated by every officer of the Government with whom I have come in contact, and to thank you for the courteous manner in which my services are acknowledged and dispensed with.

I have, &c.,

ROBERT PHARAZYN,  
Commissioner of Confiscated Lands.

The Under Secretary for Crown Lands, Wellington.

SCHEDULE.

Name.	Acreage.	Locality.	Remarks.
Major Durie ...	300	Waitotara	Protected by valuation if sold.
Wilkie Brothers ...	100	Ditto	Right of purchase under clause 23.
Baynton, W. ...	50	Railway Reserve	Lease, with right of purchase, if sold.
Wilson, W. ...	70	Whenuakura	Protected by valuation, if drains cut.
Hunt and Whitlock	207	Okotuku Block, near Kahi Stream	Protected by valuation or sale, under clause 23.

Total cash received for land sold and let from 2nd May, 1870, to 31st December, 1872, £8,808 13s. 7d.

By Authority: GEORGE DIDSBURY, Government Printer, Wellington.—1873.

[Price 3d.]