

Mr. McLean recorded that the principle on which he had acted had been “to avoid any re-opening of the past affecting either purchase, title, or decisions of the Native Land Court, and to confine himself to such arrangements as would lead to the peaceable occupation of the district by giving additional reserves to the Natives where he had found it absolutely necessary to do so.” Finally, Mr. Kemp was instructed, if any difference arose, to adjust it.

I do not find a clear record of what Mr. Kemp did; but at any rate he took upon himself largely to add to the extent of the reserves made by Mr. McLean, for, on examining the total quantity of the reserves as they were actually laid off, it turned out that they were as follow:—

Made by the award of the Native Land Court	6,226 acres.
By Dr. Featherston	3,361 „
By the Native Minister and Mr. Kemp	14,379 „

 Making altogether 23,966 acres,
or about 4,000 acres more than had been estimated when the Council was in session.

In December, 1870, Dr. Featherston returned from England, and resumed the Superintendency. He seems at once to have signified his dissent from Mr. McLean's proceedings; and on the 26th January, 1871, he addressed a letter to the Government, to which Mr. Gisborne replied on the 10th February. As this letter contained the first intimation of any protest by the Provincial authorities against Mr. McLean's action, as well as the first notice of the claim made by the province against the colony for his reserves, it will be better to give the correspondence at full length:—

His Honor I. E. FEATHERSTON to the Hon. W. GISBORNE.

SIR—

Superintendent's Office, 26th January, 1871.

I beg to bring under the consideration of Ministers the following facts connected with the Rangitikei-Manawatu purchase:—

On 16th December, 1866, a sum of £25,000 was paid over by this Province to the Ngatiapa and Ngatiraukawa Tribes, as the purchase money of a block of land lying between the Rangitikei and Manawatu Rivers, and estimated to contain 240,000 acres. The deed of cession had, at that time, been executed by considerably over 1,000 Natives having or claiming an interest in the land.

Owing, however, to the opposition of a small number of Ngatiraukawa claimants who had refused to sign the deed, the Government were unable to extinguish the Native title, and for a period of more than a year the province was kept out of possession of its purchase, while every effort was being made by the provincial agents to effect a settlement with the dissentients.

The principal obstacle to any final adjustment of the matter arose from the fact of some 800 Ngatiraukawa, whom the Commissioner refused to recognize as owners, asserting claims to various parts of the ceded block.

At length the Government decided to refer the whole question to the Native Land Court; and after a forty days' investigation at Otaki (before three Judges of the Court), in the beginning of 1868, the validity of the purchase was affirmed, and an award of 5,000 acres made to Parakaia and his section of unsatisfied claimants. Thereupon the other claims then before the Court were withdrawn by the Agent for the Natives, and every effort on the part of the Government to get them reinstated at a subsequent sitting of the Court at Rangitikei proved abortive.

The question was then hung up till July, 1869, when, at the request of the Native Agent, the whole case was reheard before other Judges of the Court, specially nominated by the Natives concerned. This investigation took place at Wellington, and extended over a period of nearly five weeks.

The judgment of the Court was a complete vindication of the purchase; the great bulk of the Ngatiraukawa claimants were declared to have no interest whatsoever in the block, and specific awards (amounting in all to 6,200 acres) were made to the claimants (sixty in number) who had been admitted as part owners.

A few days after the publication of this judgment in the *Gazette*, the Native title was declared to be extinguished over the whole of the block, save the portions awarded by the Land Court, and from that time it became a part of the territorial estate of the province. The accumulated back rents (amounting to nearly £3,000) were then handed over to the Natives; and a staff of provincial surveyors proceeded at once to the block to lay off reserves and to commence a trigonometrical survey.

A small party of dissatisfied Natives interfered to obstruct the survey, and under the direction of the Hon. the Premier (who happened fortunately to be in the district at the time) the ringleader, Miritana, was arrested and dealt with summarily for “a breach of Trigonometrical Stations Act” of the General Assembly. This vigorous action had the effect of putting a stop to all opposition, and for a time the survey of the block was pushed forward without any hindrance. As a recognition of this, Miritana received a free pardon, when only half his sentence of imprisonment had expired.

A few weeks after Miritana's liberation, a further obstruction was offered to the survey by another party of Natives (whose claims had been ignored by the Court), and in another part of the block.

The Natives were threatened with punishment, but no steps were taken to bring the offenders to justice, and the survey was accordingly suspended. For a period of many months the whole work was at a standstill, and the province was precluded from turning to profitable account a single acre of the land purchased nearly four years before, and for which it had paid so liberal a price. At length—more than a year after the adjudication by the Land Court—the Hon. Mr. McLean visited the district, and, without the knowledge or consent of the Provincial Government, made large gifts of land to the Natives—both sellers and non-sellers—believing, as he states, that this was necessary in order to preserve the peace of the country. The return of reserves made by Mr. McLean (over and above the awards of the Court and the reserves made by the Commissioner) shows an area of 10,300 acres—it is probably as much more—and Mr. Carkeek has since reported that additional reserves have been made by Mr. Kemp amounting to 4,000 acres. Some of the land thus given away consists of sand-hill and swamp,