

people of the province. It was quite obvious that the provincial interest in the Manawatu-Rangitikei Block was valueless until the Native difficulty was removed. Previous expenses connected with this duty were defrayed by the province, and I do not now see the justice of charging differently the surveys and subsequent expenditure connected with the settlement of the question.

His Honor Dr. Featherston, Wellington.

DONALD McLEAN.

About a fortnight after this, on the 2nd March, Dr. Featherston reassembled the Provincial Council, and in his opening speech expressed his own strong opinion on the question. "You are aware," his Honor said, "that when effect was attempted to be given to the judgments of the Native Land Court, by carrying out the survey of the block, these surveys were interrupted by certain Natives, instigated by Europeans, and acting under their advice in defiance of the law. The Provincial Government, during my absence, desiring above all things that the peace of the district should be preserved, requested the General Government to use its efforts to prevent the further obstruction of the surveys, and remove all possible doubts as to quiet possession of the land. * * * I am bound to say that I differ with both the General and Provincial Governments as to the necessity of any interference in the matter, for I am satisfied that if the General Government had fairly persevered in the course of action adopted, in the first obstruction of the surveyors, against Miritana and McDonald, no disturbance would have resulted, and peaceable possession would have been secured over the whole block, without the necessity of any further concessions to the Natives. * * * I felt it my duty immediately on my return to bring the claims of the province formally before the General Government, in the shape of a demand for the payment of £1 per acre for the entire area of the reserves made by the Native Minister and Mr. Kemp. I made this claim on the ground, that from the date of the notice in the *Gazette* that the Native title was extinguished over the whole block, save the portions awarded by the Native Land Court, the block became a part of the territorial estate of the province; and that the General Government had no right in any way to a single acre of it. * * * You will learn that the Government declines to admit the claims I have advanced. Still, I feel assured that the Government does not intend that the claims of the settlers arising out of its own action shall be altogether ignored, or that no allowance whatever shall be made to the province for the loss of so large an area of saleable land out of a block the Native title to which was so long ago formally declared to be extinguished, and to the proceeds whereof the exclusive right of the province is of course admitted. It is a case for equitable adjustment between the province and the colony, especially when it is considered that, the action of the General Government being taken in the interest of the maintenance of peace, the price paid to the disaffected Natives must be deemed a liability of the colony, rather than of the province."

The Provincial Council took no action whatever in the matter during that Session, nor was the Address in reply passed (after successive adjournments of debate) till the 17th March. The Address made no reference to the Manawatu case at all; and the Council adjourned to the 3rd May.

Immediately after this, Dr. Featherston being appointed Agent-General, Mr. Fitzherbert became Superintendent. On the 13th May, the Provincial Council being about to sit, Mr. Fitzherbert addressed a letter to Mr. Halcombe, who was now Provincial Treasurer, directing him to furnish a written statement setting forth the various steps taken by him (Mr. Halcombe) and his late colleagues with reference to the interference of the General Government in the Manawatu, and particularly in elucidation of the point how far they had authorized the General Government to settle the dispute by granting away provincial lands."

The following was Mr. Halcombe's reply:—

MR. A. F. HALCOMBE to the SUPERINTENDENT, Wellington.

SIR,—

Provincial Treasury, Wellington, 15th May, 1871.

In reply to your letter of the 13th instant, requesting me to state the various steps taken by the Provincial Government during the absence of Dr. Featherston, "in reference to the interference of the General Government in the Manawatu, particularly in elucidation of the point how far they authorized the General Government to settle the dispute by granting away provincial lands," I have the honor to inform you that the mode of settlement of the Manawatu difficulty adopted by the Hon. Mr. McLean was never contemplated by the Provincial Government, and that therefore they cannot be held to have authorized the action of Mr. McLean as far as the granting away the lands of the province is concerned.

I may also state that we object to the term "settlement of the dispute" when referring to the obstructions offered by the Natives to the surveyors on this block, and the removal of those obstructions. The interference of the General Government was asked, not to decide any dispute as to the ownership of the land in the Manawatu (as Mr. McLean's action would imply), but to place the Provincial Government in peaceable possession of the land formally declared, after reference to the highest tribunals, to be the property of the province. The Provincial Government always recognized that after the proclamation by His Excellency's Government of the extinguishment of the Native title, all interference with the survey parties could only be held as being entirely illegal, provocative of a breach of the peace, and punishable with fine or imprisonment.

This being the case, the Provincial Government, in the month of December, 1869, when opposition to the survey was renewed by the Natives (being aware of the serious consequences which would result to the colony from any open rupture, and aware of their inability as a Government to put down any determined opposition involving a resort to force), had repeated personal interviews with members of the General Government upon the subject, which resulted in the placing of the whole of their survey