

1875.

NEW ZEALAND.

PETITION ON BEHALF OF THE EARLY SETTLERS
IN NEW ZEALAND.

Presented 30th July 1875, and ordered to be printed.

(TOGETHER WITH EVIDENCE TAKEN BY THE PUBLIC PETITIONS COMMITTEE AND REPORT.)

To the Honorable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives
in Parliament assembled.

THE PETITION OF THE UNDERSIGNED ON BEHALF OF THE EARLY SETTLERS AND PIONEERS OF
COLONIZATION IN NEW ZEALAND, HUMBLY SHOWETH,—

1. That the systematic colonization of these Islands was commenced by the New Zealand Company in 1839–40.

2. That for some years after that date the Pioneer Settlers were placed at a disadvantage, owing to disputes which had arisen between the Imperial Government and the New Zealand Company, and more particularly in the case of the Cook Strait settlers, who were unable to get possession of the lands for which they had paid the Directors of the Company.

3. That in addition to this they had to contend with formidable Native difficulties, arising out of the circumstances of the country, and seriously impeding the work of colonization.

4. That from time to time they had to take up arms in defence of the European settlements against Maori aggressions, and for the maintenance of peace and good government, thereby losing their time and wasting their resources, to an extent ruinous in some cases and serious in all.

5. That during this early period of settlement the pioneers of colonization in the North Island were unable, with very few exceptions, to make that material progress which their enterprise and courage entitled them to; and that in many cases the families and descendants of these pioneer settlers are suffering to the present day from the effects of the drawbacks, obstructions, and difficulties so encountered by them.

6. That the circumstances under which the settlements in the South Island were founded, at a later date, were of a totally different character; and that, with the exception of Nelson, none of these settlements had to contend either with Native difficulties, or with disputes between the Government and the New Zealand Company.

7. That in the case of the Otago and Canterbury settlements, the fostering care of the Government was extended to the immigrants who had peaceable possession of a valuable estate, at a time when the settlers of the North Island were struggling on against dangers and difficulties of no ordinary magnitude, which materially retarded their progress.

8. That at the time of the arrival of the preliminary expedition of the New Zealand Company at Cook Strait the condition of the colony was as follows:—“The British settlers in New Zealand scarcely numbered 1,000 in all, of whom about 500 were settled in the Northern Peninsula and about as many on Cook Strait at Banks Peninsula and further south. The Church of England missionaries had settlements at the Bay of Islands and a short way inland, and in the valley of the Thames. The Wesleyan missionaries had stations on the Hokianga and Kaipara. Whalers and sealers had founded the irregular settlements in the central and southern parts. In addition to these, who might be reckoned settlers of some standing, a growing belief that the British Government contemplated a settlement in New Zealand had attracted a number of land speculators from Sydney.”—(“Hand Book for New Zealand,” 1843, page 65.)

9. That the events marking the early progress of the colony occurred in the following order:—The first practical founders of the colony sailed from Gravesend in September, 1839; the first emigrant vessel, the “Aurora,” arrived at Port Nicholson on the 22nd January, 1840; and the first Governor of New Zealand arrived at the Bay of Islands about the end of January, 1840. The history of New Zealand as a British colony may be held to have commenced from the proclamation of British Sovereignty in these islands by Governor Hobson, in May, 1840. The islands continued a dependency of New South Wales till May, 1841, when they were proclaimed a separate colony under an independent Government.—(“Hand Book for New Zealand,” 1843, pages 65–69.)

10. That the Treaty of Waitangi, dated the 12th day of February, 1840, which assumed on the part of the British Crown the right of regulating the disposal of public lands in New Zealand, contained an article which practically put an end to all private transactions with Natives, and pursuant