

On my return from the West Coast after the interruption of the survey, and on the occasion of my submitting to my colleagues my report [of 14 April 1879] upon the West Coast question, I then stated to them my opinion that if Te Whiti did not actively identify himself with the obstruction of the survey, or with any breaches of the peace, I would be prepared to recommend the restoration of the Parihaka Block to the original owners. Sir George Grey and myself were in accord upon this question : but the matter never came before the Cabinet for final decision. The general feeling was that it was better to keep things as they then stood, so that the question of restoration might be used as a lever to move the whole question of the West Coast into a sound and safe position. On one point the whole Government was unanimous ; namely, that any concessions made to Te Whiti and the other owners of the Parihaka Block should be absolutely conditional on good behaviour.

“(4.) It was therefore my intention, if the behaviour of Te Whiti and his people should be peaceable and conciliatory, to have recommended the restoration of the Parihaka Block, and to have pressed that recommendation upon my colleagues. The return of the lands would, nevertheless, have been subject to reservations of sites for lighthouses, for roads, and other necessary public purposes. This intention was never mentioned to the Natives, and never assumed the aspect of a promise upon which they could found any claim whatever to the restoration of the block. This intention of mine was publicly notified to the House in the first Session of 1879. Two or three months afterwards, the Ministry of which I was a member resigned, and the consideration and settlement of the question thereupon devolved upon our successors, who now constitute the present Government.”

We think Your Excellency will see that this statement by Mr. Sheehan entirely bears out the opinions we expressed in our First Report. The only difference, indeed, between what we recommended and what Sir George Grey's Government would have done, is that whereas they proposed to give Te Whiti the whole block down to the sea, we advised that the portion between the new road and the coast, now found to amount to about 15,000 acres, should (with the exception of Native cultivations, burial-places, and fishing-places) be retained by the Crown for settlement. Substantially, then, we have nothing to alter in our recommendation. For even with respect to the shelter which Te Whiti gave to Hiroki, it will be remembered that in Major Brown's report of 2 April 1879, laid before Parliament with Mr. Sheehan's Cabinet minute of 14 April, that officer reported : “Te Whiti said to me very plainly, ‘If Hiroki had been killed on the way I should have had nothing to say : as he has reached me, I am prepared to hear what the Minister has to say about it.’ The Native mind sees it in the light that if the Government cannot deal with Hiroki, it cannot deal with the confiscated lands.” If the sanctuary given to Hiroki was not then, it certainly cannot now, be brought up as forfeiting all claim to consideration on Te Whiti's part. Mr. Sheehan visited Te Whiti while Hiroki was under his protection : and the present Government has sent Mr. Parris to communicate with Te Whiti on the subject of the reserves. It is not, in our opinion, necessary either for the dignity of the Government or for the vindication of the law, to let Hiroki's presence at Parihaka be a barrier now any more than it was then. Successive Ministers have had political meetings with and accepted the hospitality of Tawhiao (the Maori King), Rewi Maniapoto, Manuhiri, Ngakau, and other leading chiefs of the King's council, although these shelter half a dozen men charged with murders and outrages more deliberate than that committed by Hiroki. Te Whiti knows, as the Maori King knows, that these crimes are not condoned, and will be expiated whenever the arm of the law can reach the criminals, though it may be years before punishment overtakes them. And as to any other act of Te Whiti's between July 1879 and the other day when the fencing began across the new road, there was none that could fairly be called hostile. The Question of Parihaka is still the pivot on which the settlement of the difficulty turns, and it is not less hopeless now than ever to suppose that any settlement will be made that is not made with Te Whiti. The problem is not altered from what it was last March. As we said to Your Excellency then, “the people are there, and they must have land to live upon : and what is more, being there, they certainly will not go away.”