

The Bishop of Nelson then explained the objects the deputation had in view. three Maori Chiefs present had brought with them a petition to the Queen, signed by Native Chiefs, asking for the investigation and redress of grievances under which they laboured, and they were desirous of presenting it to Her Majesty, at the same time requesting the acceptance of some presents, according to the Maori custom. They complained of the incarceration of Te Whiti and his people, who, it was alleged, were guiltless of any crime, and also that the reserve of land promised had not been properly secured to them. The treatment of Te Whiti was the more extraordinary considering how much had been condoned in the case of disloyal Natives, while throughout the whole of the disturbances he had never been in arms against the Government, but had prevented war, in the full confidence that his legal position and claim would be gone into.

The petition addressed to "The Good Queen of England and the Empress of India," and which saluted Her Majesty, "whose fame for graciousness had extended to all the nations of the world," as mother of the Maori tribes, was then handed to Lord Kimberley.

Lord Kimberley asked whether the petition had been presented to the Governor or the Government of New Zealand.

The Bishop of Nelson: I think it has not been so presented.

Lord Kimberley pointed out that the memorial ought to have been presented to the Governor and the Government of New Zealand in the first instance, in order to enable him to have their views on the question; and he remarked that under the present circumstances he could give no definite answer to the petition.

The three Maori Chiefs then spoke in their own language, their statements being interpreted by the Rev. Mr. Grace. One of the chiefs (Hirini Taiwhanga) apparently understood a little English, although declining to converse in that tongue. Firstly, they complained that the Treaty of Waitangi had not been upheld, and urged that it should be maintained, and the English and Native races governed according to it; secondly, they desired that steps should be taken to unite more closely the English and the Native race, instead of the latter being treated by the former as a horse treated his enemy—kicking him away; and, thirdly, they were much concerned at the treatment to which their fellow-countryman, Te Whiti, was subjected, and they wished him to be set at liberty.

In reply to a question put by Lord Kimberley as to the reason why the petition had not been presented to the New Zealand Government,—

Wiremu Puhī te Hīhi said the omission was due to the haste the Chiefs made to present the petition to the Queen, as they had heard reports that her life had been attempted by assassins. He added that he was perfectly aware that Her Majesty had given the New Zealand Government power to deal with its domestic affairs, but he thought the Government at New Zealand had not acted as the Queen would have done under similar circumstances. He further stated that the Native grievances extended throughout the Island.

Lord Kimberley requested the interpreter to tell the Chiefs that to pass over the Colonial Government, and to endeavour to induce the Imperial Government to act independently, would not tend to the union of the English and Native races.

One of the Chiefs (Hakena Parore) said the Chiefs had no wish to ignore the New Zealand Government, and they were doing their utmost to diminish drunkenness among the Native tribes by means of total abstinence societies.

Mr. Wilfrid Wilson (of New Zealand) said there was reason to believe that some of the Native Chiefs who signed the Treaty of Waitangi were not the owners of land, and there was a large number of Chiefs who owned land that did not sign the treaty.

Sir T. Powell Buxton, having observed that a good deal might turn on the question whether the treaty was obsolete or not,—

Lord Kimberley said the treaty was very simple, and provided that the possession of land was to be respected. It was not the duty of the Colonial Office to advise the Queen in reference to local matters like the present. The management of the land of New Zealand was absolutely handed over to the New Zealand Government, and the Queen was advised by the Ministers of the Colony with regard to these matters, and not by himself, as there could not be two governments for one country. It had been decided, as more likely to conduce to the peace of the country, that the affairs of New Zealand should be managed at the Colony rather than in Downing Street. He had a strong conviction that that course was right. The question now raised by the deputation appeared to be connected with confiscations arising out of wars, and the treaty would not be concerned in such confiscations, but the point was whether they were just. Having received the petition, he should transmit it to the Colonial Government, and ask them to state their views with regard to it. It might be thought desirable to issue another Royal Commission, but that step rested with the Colonial Government.

At the request of his Lordship, the Interpreter told the Chiefs that the Queen took a great interest in the welfare of the Native population of New Zealand, and it was a matter of great satisfaction to Her Majesty that of late years there had been no wars or bloodshed between the two races, which was a happy omen for the future.

The deputation then retired.