

1884.

NEW ZEALAND.

THE OPENING OF KAWHIA HARBOUR.

(MEMORANDUM BY THE NATIVE MINISTER.)

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

MEMORANDUM BY THE NATIVE MINISTER ON THE OPENING OF KAWHIA HARBOUR, AND ON THE RECENT ESTABLISHMENT OF A CONSTABULARY POST IN THAT LOCALITY.

It is a curious circumstance in the history of New Zealand that Kawhia, perhaps the best port on the West Coast of the North Island, should have remained closed to Europeans until the present year, for there can be little doubt that, however desirable the opening of the harbour under lawful authority may be now, it was even more desirable twenty years ago.

There are considerable blocks of Crown lands on the coast between Kawhia and Mokau acquired under old purchase deeds, but, unfortunately, none of these are in the immediate vicinity of Kawhia. However, some three years since, the Government became possessed by purchase, of a small piece of Crown-granted land at Kawhia suitable for the site of a township, and last February this was quietly taken possession of, and laid out in suitable allotments for sale.

It is certain that Tawhiao, and other chiefs who desire to preserve a sovereign authority for him, felt objections to this action, but scarcely knew how to express them with effect. They correctly assumed that the occupation of a township at Kawhia, and the marking-out of the channels of the harbour without Tawhiao's permission being asked or obtained, was an assertion of the Sovereign rights of the Queen without any recognition of the pretensions of the Maori potentate. But little, if any, objection was made, and many even of the supposed adherents of the Maori King scarcely concealed their satisfaction at what was done. It is unlikely that any protest whatever would have been made had it not been for the delay which, owing to certain legal technicalities, has taken place in the sale of the township. But in consequence of this delay, and the stoppage of a road leading to Kawhia from exhaustion of the vote for the purpose, the Maoris seem to have come to the conclusion that the Government was hesitating in the course to be pursued from fear of infringing upon the *mana* of Tawhiao. I have satisfied myself that Tawhiao, with the advice of certain other persons, determined to prove this assumption by applying tests to it. First, the beacons were to be cut down, then the buoys sunk, finally the survey pegs of the township were to be pulled up. The execution of the first part of the programme was all they found necessary if their object was to ascertain the feelings and intentions of the Government.

On the 21st ultimo information was received that the beacons had been destroyed, and rather alarming intimation was conveyed to the Government with regard to further unlawful action intended to be taken by the Maoris. Mr. Butler, my Private Secretary, having been sent to make inquiry as to what had been done, met one of the two minor chiefs who had destroyed the beacons, and called upon him by my instructions to immediately assist in their re-erection. This he said he could not do without instructions from Tawhiao; and Mr. Butler thereupon returned to Wellington to report the circumstances to me. Upon consideration the Government arrived at the conclusion that it would be proper, in view of what had taken place, to establish a Constabulary post at Kawhia for the purpose of maintaining the law in that locality. Accordingly, on the third of the present month I landed 112 of the Armed Constabulary at Kawhia, and encamped them near the site of the township. I found, on communicating with the chief of the immediate locality, that Tawhiao had been there the previous evening, but had left during the night for a place about two miles off. It was stated that he was anxious and uneasy at what had occurred, and somewhat alarmed on finding that Government viewed the destruction of the beacons in so serious a light. Judging from what I saw then, and learned afterwards, I am of opinion that, although the Natives of Kawhia are divided on this question, the bulk of them are well pleased at the establishment of the Constabulary post as putting an end to the unsatisfactory state of doubt and uncertainty in which they have been living for years. Various chiefs came to see me; and, without discussing the question of Tawhiao's *mana*, tacitly and kindly accepted the situation. Indeed, I observed a disposition to make our position as little difficult as possible; and, by pointing out where firewood could be obtained by the constables without objections from the Maoris, they certainly removed one difficulty which occurred to me.

On Friday morning Tawhiao came over to see me. For a long time after the usual friendly salutations he remained without making more than a few casual remarks to me. He wore a look of anxiety, and evidently had something which he considered of importance to say; but he appeared

to find it difficult to make his mind up as to how he should say it, and seemed uncomfortable as to how I would be likely to take it. He remarked that there was no harm in a man speaking strongly at first, provided he laughed afterwards. At length he spoke in a very quiet manner, seated in my tent, and with about 120 Natives gathered close around. He began by saying that the destruction of the beacons was his work, for he wanted to know what they meant. There were other subjects to discuss: there was the township and road; but to-day he would speak of the harbour of Kawhia and the beacons. There were other harbours he might claim: there was Kaipara, there was Manukau, there were others; but Kawhia was the last, and could it not be left to him—to him alone? The beacons, What did they mean? What was the object of them? Perhaps they implied a taking possession of the land. The road also he objected to. He disapproved of roads, and had not been consulted about this one, nor about the opening of Kawhia. He was content with the letter of the Queen sent to him (Treaty of Waitangi).

I replied that the Treaty of Waitangi had two sides. The Queen had undertaken to respect the rights of the Maoris to their lands, but the Maoris had agreed to accept Her Sovereignty. No lands had been taken without payment, except where tribes had first violated their part of the treaty. The beacons did not take possession of the land: their purpose was obvious—namely, to guide vessels, and prevent loss of property and lives. The harbour was claimed under the Sovereignty of the Queen; and, as a servant of Her Majesty, I could recognize no other Sovereign authority in New Zealand. As he well knew I had informed him of my first coming to Kawhia; but he had left on his travels previously to my arrival. It was not intended to seize land. No; even the place where I had encamped the Constabulary was not claimed by me. When the time came for the removal of the Constabulary the land would belong to whoever were proved to be the lawful owners of it. As for the construction of roads over Native lands, that was also a lawful act. It was no theft, but a valuable present to the owners of adjacent land. The destruction of the beacons was wrong—very wrong—and a repetition of it could not be tolerated. Those who had destroyed them had brought the Constabulary here, not I. I could see little excuse for that wrong act; but, as Tawhiao alleged there had been misconception, I would take no further action about it.

Tawhiao: "I will re-erect the beacons myself. I hope it is not already done. I will proceed at once to do it."

I informed him that the work was done, and that presently the steamer would return to her anchorage.

Tawhiao expressed his intention of going to Wellington next session, and hinted that he would have no objections to visit Wellington in the "Hinemoa" on her next trip. Very little pressing would probably have induced him to return to Wellington with me. He afterwards, in company with two other chiefs, dined with me on board the "Hinemoa," where he seemed to enjoy himself very much, and left apparently in high good humour.

I may, in conclusion, be permitted to express the opinion that the establishment of a Constabulary station at Kawhia, although forced on Government as a necessity, will have a beneficial effect on the Maori mind in the furtherance of law and order.

JOHN BRYCE,

Minister for Native Affairs.

16th October, 1883.