

lands would be given to the whole people, speaking and acting by their chosen representatives, and that full power would be granted to them thus to do what they chose with their own as long as they injured no other persons, the Maori question and the Maori difficulty would be at once a thing of the past.

There can be no doubt that, during all the years in which legislation has been attempted on this subject, the aim of successive Parliaments has always and invariably been to act with justice and kindness towards the Maoris; yet, as the result of all the efforts made honestly and in good faith, we see a failure so great and complete as to dispose the public mind to retract all the steps taken during the last twenty years.

What are the causes which have conduced to a result so lamentable? Let me catalogue a few of them—(1) Ignorance of the subject on which legislation was brought to bear; (2) the changing of Ministers and political plans; (3) fear and doubt which existed in the Maori mind perpetually, breeding mistrust and want of confidence; (4) our determination to enforce our system of land tenure—*i.e.*, individual freehold titles in lieu of tribal holdings; (5) the evil influences which have always surrounded the Maori question and the Native Department—the greed, the selfishness, the earth-hunger which have ever sacrificed the public good upon the altar of private gain; (6) and last, but certainly not least, our treatment of the Maoris, which has ever been to dragoon them by lead and steel, treating them as a conquered people, or to cajole them by flour and sugar, as if they were children. These we have, ever since the year 1865, done; but we have, since that time, never tried to obtain their advice and co-operation in efforts at legislation at once to deal justly with them and to advance the settlement of this colony.

In June of last year, together with Wi Pere, the present member for the Eastern Maori District, I was invited by the great chiefs of the Ngatimaniapoto to visit them in the Waikato and advise them as to the methods to be adopted by which their isolation from the Europeans should be removed, while at the same time their lands might be preserved from the disastrous consequences which had befallen the lands of all other tribes. Prior to this or since that time, I have seen and conversed with almost every leading chief in New Zealand upon these subjects. I spent between a fortnight and three weeks in the King country canvassing these matters with Wahanui and other leading chiefs in the presence of large numbers of the people, and I am convinced that if the system in this paper advocated becomes law, that the whole Maori lands of New Zealand will be thrown open for settlement, and a final and complete end be placed to that iniquitous system of dealing with the Natives which is the darkest blot upon the history of this young colony. Prior to my visiting the Ngatimaniapoto, I spent some time with Sir George Grey, who had been urgently implored to visit them and advise with them on this subject, and I enjoyed during many days the privilege of discussing with him all possible plans by which just dealing between the Natives and Europeans could be secured, by which intending settlers could be enabled to obtain land on fair terms at the least expense, and with a perfect title, by which the Natives themselves should bear a portion of the responsibility and labour of settling this great question and participating in the benefits of civilized settlement, and by which the whole community should be enriched and benefited; and the result generally was that, so long as the Maoris were permitted to exercise the power of selling or leasing direct to Europeans, that power should only be exercised by the tribes as such, acting through committees chosen by themselves.

The one Maori of all others who has made a study of these questions, and has considered them in every way for years, is Wi Pere. No man in New Zealand has so great a personal influence over his fellow Natives as he. No man, whether European or Maori, has clearer views as to what is necessary or advantageous upon this question.

From all my interviews and conversations with the chiefs of every tribe I am convinced that they would gladly work with us throughout the length and breadth of the colony if they were permitted to manage their lands by committees chosen by themselves, but subject to the public decisions and orders of the tribes, and to the supervision of the Native Land Court or Trust Commissioners. I leave it to the understanding of all intelligent men to say what an influx of population, what a growth of production, what increase of national wealth, and what a measure of national credit would accrue to us if this rational plan were to become the law of New Zealand.

I venture to suggest that this plan be submitted to the whole Maori people; that a meeting of the great chiefs be called, to be held on the borders of or in the King country, the expenses of which shall be borne by the Government; that the resolutions of that meeting be submitted to the tribes, and, if approved, be embodied in a law. If such be done I do not hesitate to predict a condition of great prosperity through these means to the colony.

Since writing the above, I have been informed by Sir George Grey that in 1861 the principle of tribal dealing with Native lands through committees or runangas was agreed upon between the Governor and his Executive. The correspondence is contained in the Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives, 1862, E.—2, pages 10 to 13. If this had then been done the colony would have saved itself much trouble, expense, and discredit.

W. L. REES.