

Nos. 195, 196, 197, 326, 347, 355, and 373.—Petitions of HAMIORA MANGAKAHIA and 6 Others, WIARI TOPIA and 113 Others, TANA TAINGAKAWA and 5,975 Others, TOATAUA TE AKE and 3,390 Others, TAARE POROTENE and 41 Others, HENARE TE ATUA and 98 Others, TEIRA WAIRAU and 145 Others. Total signatures, 9,775.

PETITIONERS disapprove of the Native Lands Settlement and Administration Bill, and pray that a measure be introduced more advantageous to the Maori race.

I am directed to report that the Committee recommend that these petitions be referred to the Government for consideration.

3rd November, 1898.

R. M. HOUSTON, Chairman.

No. 195 (Mr. Kaihau).

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives of New Zealand in Parliament assembled.

THE petition of the undersigned aboriginal natives of New Zealand humbly sheweth,—

1. That your petitioners are opposed to the passing by your honourable House of the Bill introduced into it by the Right Honourable R. J. Seddon, Premier of New Zealand, intituled "The Native Lands Settlement and Administration Act, 1898."

2. That the prominent supporters of the Bill, who are aboriginal natives, are principally those who will not be affected by it, being either persons for whose benefit special legislation has been introduced into Parliament, or whose lands are mortgaged to the Public Trustee, or who have no lands at all.

3. Your petitioners object to the Bill for many reasons, of which the following are the principal:—

- (a.) That it proposes to vest their lands in a Board absolutely controlled by the Government, which will probably exercise its powers of control rather for the advantage of settlement in general than for the advantage of the Maori owners.
- (b.) That by the proposals in the Bill a bare majority of Natives in a district, who may be unintelligent and incapable of managing their own affairs, may deprive a minority, who may be educated and capable, of any voice in the management of their own land.
- (c.) That such proposals are contrary to the letter and spirit of the Treaty of Waitangi, and to the rights of the Natives as British subjects.
- (d.) That the proposed Board will be entirely controlled by Government, because it will nominate on such Board two members and the Commissioner of Crown Lands, who shall be Chairman, and because it will pay to the elected Native members only such salaries and travelling-allowances as the Governor in Council prescribes, and because it has the power to remove from office for alleged misconduct any member at any time.
- (e.) That your petitioners fear that the borrowing-powers proposed in the Bill, and the regulations for the disposal of lands, may be used rather in the interests of the particular theories of settlement which may be advocated by the Government of the day than in the interests of the Native owners, who may find that their lands have been pledged for the repayment of moneys borrowed for surveying, roads, bridges, railways, and other improvements which in other parts of the colony have been made at the expense of the consolidated revenue, to which the Native owners have contributed.
- (f.) That your petitioners object to the transference, as proposed by the Bill, to the Native Land Board, a body probably without judicial experience, and which may be controlled as aforesaid by political influence, of the powers of partition, succession, the definition of relative interests, and the appointment of trustees, as proposed by section 21 of the said Bill. They also say that the Bill contains no provision for any right of appeal from the decision of the Board in any of these important matters.
- (g.) That your petitioners are uninformed as to the intention and operation of section 47 of the said proposed Bill, which, in the absence of precise information to the contrary, they apprehend and believe would render their lands liable to many onerous statutory provisions to which they are not now subject.
- (h.) That your petitioners have many other specific objections to the Bill, or particular sections thereof, which they propose to set forth when this their petition comes under the consideration of a Committee of your honourable House.

4. That your petitioners believe that the expenses to be paid by them out of their lands in the working of the said Bill will be far greater than the expenses heretofore paid to the Native Land Court; and that the Bill, if carried by your honourable House, will sooner or later be equivalent to a confiscation of their beneficial interests in the lands remaining to them.

5. Your petitioners, according to the petition to Her Majesty and to the Parliament of New Zealand, referred to in the preamble to the said Bill, are desirous that the residue of the Native land now remaining in possession of the Native owners should be reserved for their use and benefit in such wise as to protect them from the risk of being left landless; but, for the reasons heretofore set forth, and for many minor reasons hereafter to be stated, they feel assured that the purpose they have in view will not be attained by the machinery provided by the Bill now before Parliament.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable House would be pleased to reject the Bill intituled "The Native Lands Settlement and Administration Bill, 1898," or, in the alterna-