

1911.
NEW ZEALAND.

RESIGNATION OF ALEXANDER KEEFER, PRESIDENT, TAIRAWHITI DISTRICT MAORI LAND BOARD

(CORRESPONDENCE RELATING TO THE).

Laid on the Table by leave of the House.

21st August, 1911.

Memorandum for the President, Tairawhiti District Maori Land Board, Gisborne.

Wharekahika Block.

It has been brought under my notice that your Board has been taking a very wide interpretation of section 209 of the Native Land Act, 1909, which suggests that any Board may "in the public interest" allow certain proceedings.

From the information at hand as to the size of the block and the number of owners, it is considered no action should have been taken by way of precedent consent. The matter was one which had been broached with larger blocks in the Waikato and other districts, and I assured the Government without hesitation that there was no danger of the Boards proceeding on the lines suggested by the Lands Department in giving precedent consent to alienations of this nature. It is somewhat a surprise to find your Board has evidently gone deeply into this position. It is presumed this section would be of very little use, and used only in exceptional circumstances, when it would have to be absolutely in the public interest.

Of course, without the information before me I have nothing to show me why your Board has taken this position, but it requires some argument to show that Natives should dabble in such inchoate titles—that is, where lands are to be alienated before being specifically defined. This course would hardly be considered of benefit to the public generally, as there is only one class, who may be termed the speculator, who would enter into negotiations.

The position that we are now placed in is that a Court is asked to sit to allocate interests that certain Europeans have acquired from these precedent consents. I shall feel obliged if you will advise me by telegram on Wednesday the total area of this block; the number of owners; how many alienations you have given precedent consent for, and assumed area. I take it that in your returns heretofore furnished, beyond noting them as meetings for precedent consent, the areas therein will in no way affect the titles you have given of alienations, as I presume you will not return same until actually approved by affixing the seal of your Board.

THOS. W. FISHER, Under-Secretary.

TELEGRAM FROM ALEX. KEEFER, President, Gisborne, to UNDER-SECRETARY, NATIVE DEPARTMENT, Wellington.

23rd August, 1911.

RE Wharekahika: Estimated area 42,000 acres; 707 owners; 15 precedent consents granted; assumed area 20,000 acres. No dealings whatever confirmed, but applications are applied for but have been adjourned by Board until the Court has partitioned block.