

REPORT of the Select Committee of the House of Representatives on the Pre-emptive Land Claims Bill.

The Select Committee of the House of Representatives appointed on the 11th day of September, 1854, for the purpose of considering the provisions of the Pre-emptive Land Claims Bill, consisting of Messrs. Carleton, King, Cutten, Porter, Merriman, Weld, and Brown, have agreed to the following Report :—

Your Committee have found it impossible, without more consideration than could be given at this late period of the Session, and without statistical information before them which can only be supplied by the Government, to bring up a matured and satisfactory Report on the Bill committed to their charge.

But your Committee are of opinion that great injustice has been done to many pre-emptive land claimants ; that the faith of the Crown has not been maintained towards them ; that in the supposed settlement of pre-emptive land claims, the New Zealand Government appears to have been guided by no fixed principle whatever, while much evil has resulted, and is likely still to result, from the unsatisfactory state in which those claims are left.

Your Committee, while of opinion that immediate legislation on the question, were it possible, would be highly desirable, have agreed that future legislation is indispensable. In the mean time, with a view to the abatement of present and pressing evil, they recommend to the House the following Resolutions, which they think are such as the House might with propriety adopt.

1. That in the opinion of this House, the final settlement of outstanding Land Claims throughout the Colony is one of the principal objects requiring the attention of the Legislature.

2. That this House regrets that existing circumstances, and particularly want of information, together with the absence of all preparation by the Government for the work of such legislation, necessitates the postponement of that important subject to a future Session.

3. That it is the imperative duty of the Government before the next Session, to obtain and lay before the Legislature full information on the subject, including detailed particulars of all outstanding Land Claims.

4. That, in particular, as regards Claims under Governor Fitzroy's 10s. an acre and one penny an acre Proclamations, it is the duty of the Government finally to adjust and settle such Claims without delay, observing the principle laid down by Her Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies, namely, that "whatever extent the faith of the Crown has been pledged to purchasers under such Proclamations, it must be maintained inviolate."

5. That pending such final adjustment and settlement, it is the duty of the Government to abstain from disposing of Lands over which such Claims may extend.

6. That a humble address be presented to His Excellency embodying the foregoing Resolutions.

HUGH CARLETON,
Chairman.