

EXTRACTS FROM THE VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 23, 1856.

Native Offenders Bill:—Ordered, That the Native Offenders Bill be referred to a Select Committee to consider and report thereon, the Committee to consist of Mr. Daldy, Mr. Williamson, Mr. Henderson, Mr. Campbell, Mr. Brown, and Mr. Sewell (Colonial Treasurer).

FRIDAY, JULY 25, 1856.

Ordered that Mr. Beckham, Resident Magistrate, Mr. Commissioner McLean, Mr. Fenton, Native Secretary, Mr. C. O. Davis, and certain Natives, be requested to attend to give evidence before the Committee.

SATURDAY, JULY 26, 1856.

Mr. Commissioner McLean in attendance.

1. *The Chairman.*] Have you many opportunities of communication with the Natives?—The nature of my occupation places me in constant communication with the Natives.

2. How long have you been in your present situation?—I have been in that situation ten years, and have been in the Colony since 1840, and during the whole of that time have had opportunities of being acquainted with Native affairs.

3. Have you had opportunities of visiting the various parts of the Colony?—I have been in all parts of the Colony, and was resident at Taranaki during the Native disturbances in 1844 and 1845, also at Wellington during 1846 and 1847, travelling to and fro.

4. Have you made yourself acquainted with the Native Offenders Bill?—I have seen the Bill now before the House, and have made myself acquainted with its provisions, and I think a Bill of that kind very desirable.

5. You understand that the general grounds of the Bill are, under certain circumstances, to induce the resident traders and Missionaries between the Native and European population to co-operation?—I do.

6. Do you think it desirable that under any circumstances that object should be provided for by law?—I think so, under certain circumstances.

7. Under what circumstances?—I think that, in cases where the Natives have been guilty of any serious offence, it would be desirable that the district in which that particular tribe resided should not, until they had rendered reparation for such offence, reap the benefits of commercial intercourse with the Europeans.

8. Do you think it would have a good effect?—I think it would have a good effect, inasmuch as other Natives would see that some distinction was made between those who regarded English laws and those who set them entirely at defiance.

9. Would the Natives agree willingly to such an interference with their customs?—It is frequently suggested by some of the most influential chiefs, that when other Natives in that way have offended, they should not be allowed to have their usual supplies of tobacco, blankets, and other European supplies of commodities. A tribe laid under such a restriction for a short time would not regard such an act as a declaration of war; they would simply consider it a species of degradation brought on by their own conduct.

10. Would the neighbouring tribes object to seeing the Act carried out?—If the feelings of the neighbouring tribes were opposed to the act or crime committed, they would co-operate in seeing that restitution was obtained; if they were abettors of the act they would be of a like opinion.

11. Would that be likely to lead to acts of retaliation?—No; I think, if cautiously done, there would be no danger.

12. In what way would you enforce an Act of that kind?—I think the power to seize the vessels and property of the offending tribe would be a suitable mode of enforcing the law.

13. Would not the co-operation of friendly tribes be a strong means of enforcing the law and provisions of this Act?—It would, for a friendly chief has already acted upon the terms of the Bill, and has seized one of the vessels in which the powder was lately taken from the Kawau, and will not give up the vessel until some restitution is made for the theft.

14. Would that be likely to lead to retaliation?—No; the tribe are fully aware of what they have done, and know that they merit severe punishment; they feel that they are in the wrong. Perhaps it would be more in accordance with their military ideas that troops should be marched against them, than that they should be subject to the civil penalties, which are more degrading.