

MEMORANDUM FOR THE GOVERNOR.

The rejection by the Secretary of State of the arrangement embodied in the Resolutions of the last Session of the General Assembly on the question of responsibility in Native Affairs, having rendered necessary some new adjustment of the relations between the Governor and Ministers in that respect, and the propriety of immediately summoning the Assembly to make such adjustment having already been partly discussed in Executive Council, Ministers have now, at His Excellency's request, to tender their definitive advice on this subject.

In any ordinary circumstances of the Colony, Ministers could have but one recommendation to make in this matter. It would be that the Assembly should be summoned at once to decide as far as lies in its power, a question of such importance to the country.

At the present moment however, war with some of the most powerful tribes appears inevitable and imminent. Every effort to conciliate these tribes has failed, especially those on the Waikato. No known ground of complaint against Government, reasonable or unreasonable, has been left to them; yet their acts of aggression have been continually increasing in frequency and violence. The expulsion of the Civil Commissioner Mr. Gorst, and his scholars from Government land at Awamutu; the seizure of property; the driving away of all Europeans married to Maori women, and the kidnapping and abduction of their wives and half-caste children; the complicity of these tribes in the murders at Oakura, of which they were the prompters, and their adoption of the cause of the murderers; the abundant evidence of their attempts, to a considerable extent successful, to organize a general conspiracy to expel, or murder, the European population throughout the Northern Island; these things shew that it is no longer at the option of Government to choose between Peace and War—but that the Natives have determined to force the latter upon us. It is unquestionable that no chance is left for the establishment of any peace that is likely to be permanent, until the Natives have been taught that they cannot make aggressions on the lives and property of Europeans with impunity. The aggressions already committed by them really amount to a declaration of war—and the preparations they are making to meet it seem to prove that this is their own opinion.

At a time then, when immediate energetic and decisive measures are absolutely necessary, it appears to ministers that to summon the Assembly would be to distract the attention of the Executive Government, and paralyze the efficient action so essentially necessary in the present crisis. Moreover, it would be impossible for Ministers to give proper attention to the preparation and conduct of measures to be brought before the Assembly, and the attempt to do so would probably result in the whole business of the Executive Government being imperfectly and inefficiently performed.

The permanent settlement of the general question of responsibility for the conduct of Native Affairs might be waived until the General Assembly can meet under more favorable circumstances. For the meantime, Ministers, expressly leaving the definitive adjustment of this matter to the Assembly, are willing to take upon themselves a temporary responsibility to the following extent.

The Governor, at a late meeting of the Executive Council, stated that it was impossible to settle the Taranaki question so long as the Waikato was the centre of disaffection, and the wealthy and prosperous settlement of Auckland was constantly threatened with invasion and destruction from that quarter; that he had arranged with the Lieut.-General when he went to Taranaki, only to try if the Waikato tribes would allow the difficulties in that Province to be settled without their interference, and that if they would not, then not to run the risk of the destruction of the Auckland settlement, but immediately to return there, and after bringing the Waikato tribes to terms, then conclusively to settle the difficulties at Taranaki. His Excellency then proceeded to explain in detail to Ministers the plan he would recommend for the defence of the Southern frontier of the settled districts of the Province of Auckland, and the establishment of a basis for further military operations in the interior of the enemy's country.

The plan, briefly stated, is to make the Waikato river, from the sea on the West Coast to its Southern bend in the middle of the island, a temporary line of defence, by placing armed steamers on the river, and by establishing posts on its northern bank. Then from the bend of the river to establish a line of fortified posts, extending to the Hauraki Gulf—the intervals to be defended by cavalry—the Gulf and its shores to be looked after by another steamer. Next, to throw forward military posts from the central bend of the river up to Paetai and Ngaruawahia, taking permanent possession of these places, the latter of which will be the point where one steamer will usually be stationed. At the same time to clear out all hostile Natives at present residing between the Auckland isthmus, and the line of the River and fortified posts first above mentioned, which together cross the island. Lastly to confiscate the lands of the hostile Natives, part of which lands would be given away and settled on military tenure to provide for the future security of the districts nearer Auckland, and the remainder sold to defray the expenses of the War.

The execution of these plans would require the employment of a considerable body of Militia and Volunteers, and the consequent expenditure of large sums of money on the part of the Colony. Measures for the defence of the other settlements of the Northern Island would necessarily have to be taken at the same time. And the lands of the Natives in their neighbourhood, who should take up arms against us, would have to be similarly confiscated and dealt with.

Ministers cordially concur in these plans of His Excellency, and they are willing to take upon themselves the responsibility for their adoption, on the understanding that they will be carried out as a whole, and also that, as far as this responsibility relates to Military expenditure, Ministers will pay