

denied that the private and irregular nature of the arrangements which the Civil Commissioner is authorised to make, places him in the greatest danger of unconsciously allowing his judgment to be influenced by partialities or dislikes, which, from his manifold dealings with the natives, he may have formed towards different individuals amongst them. Any fears of this kind may, of course, be quite groundless, but I think that, without very urgent necessity, it is not right that an officer of the Government should be placed in a position so liable to a risk of this kind.

The natives, on the other hand, are perplexed and exceedingly discontented with the irregular and unsatisfactory measures hitherto taken to adjust their claims, and as a proof of the feeling entertained by them, I may state that only yesterday a party of friendly natives commenced felling timber on land which has been selected and surveyed, declaring that the land was theirs, nothing having been given to them in return for it.

The constant recurrence of disturbances of this kind, which may at any time lead to actual strife, can, I think, only be avoided by referring all their claims in an open Court and regular way to the Compensation Court, established by law, and enforcing implicit obedience to the decisions of the Court.

I have only further to suggest, in reference to this matter, that if urgent business elsewhere, or the difficulty of collecting all the claims, should render it impossible to hold a sitting of the Compensation Court in this Province without some further delay, it would, I think, have some good effect if a definite notice fixing the time for the sitting of the Court, and calling in claims not yet preferred, were issued and circulated amongst the natives. Their distrust of the intentions of the Government is, however, I am informed, so profound, that I fear nothing but the actual opening of the Court will have the effect of fully restoring confidence.

I have, &c.,

H. R. RICHMOND,

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Wellington.

Superintendent.

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No. 10.

(No. 98.) Copy of a Letter from HIS HONOR H. R. RICHMOND to the HON. E. W. STAFFORD.

SIR,—

Superintendent's Office, New Plymouth, 17th February, 1866.

In reference to the subject of my letter, No. 92, of the 8th instant, I take the first opportunity of stating that on enquiry I find I have been under a misapprehension as to the Civil Commissioner being authorised to take any steps towards the adjustment of the land claims of the natives in this Province. The simple truth is that nothing whatever is being done with reference to these claims, which sufficiently accounts for the dissatisfaction and actual resistance of the natives.

Mr. Parris informs me that he never actually received the instructions under which I believed him to be acting, and fully bears me out in everything I have said as to the pressing importance of the settlement of these claims in the manner appointed by the New Zealand Settlements Act.

The error into which I have fallen in this matter might, no doubt, have been avoided by personal enquiry as to the nature of the Civil Commissioner's instructions, but the fact of my being under such an impression is a proof of the want of any sufficient connection between the Provincial Government and the Native Department in this Province, and from this, and the consequent want of public information as to the powers and duties of that department, and the manner in which they are exercised, arises the very general feeling of distrust to which I referred in my former letter.

I do not think that the time has yet arrived when the Native Office can be properly made a department of the Provincial Government, but when it is considered that the Provincial Executive and Legislature must constantly have to do with questions more or less affecting the interests of the natives, and that the Civil Commissioner, on the other hand, has to decide many matters in which the interests of the white population are involved, it must be evident that there ought to be at least some organised connection between the two authorities in the Province, by means of which each may have a voice in all matters affecting both races, the decision in case of difference of opinion resting with the Colonial Government.

Something in this direction was attempted by the late Native Minister in his letter, No. 438, of the 8th September, 1865, but the arrangement, in order to be practically operative, should be made more definitely, and should give the Provincial Government a voice in and the right to acquire full information upon all important matters to be transacted by the Native Office before action is taken therein.

I understand the Civil Commissioner to agree with me that something of the kind proposed would be advantageous to the public service, whilst it would relieve him of much of the responsibility of any acts of his in which the Provincial Government had concurred.

Reverting to the subject of my former letter, I trust the mistaken ground upon which I insisted in pointing out the necessity of an early sitting of the Compensation Court in this Province, will not be suffered to diminish unduly your estimate of the real importance of the settlement of the land claims.

It is a sufficient argument against further delay that the land of friendly natives has been occupied for so long a time without their claims having been heard, and that their discontent has led them to actual resistance.

I have, &c.,

H. R. RICHMOND,

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Wellington.

Superintendent.