

REPORT BY MR. COOPER ON RESERVES, NATIVE LANDS, ETC., HAWKE'S BAY.

Copy of a Letter from Mr. COOPER to the Hon. J. C. RICHMOND.

SIR,—

Napier, 26th August, 1867.

In compliance with instructions left with me by Mr. Rolleston on the occasion of his visit to Napier, I have the honor to enclose a skeleton map of this Province showing the main features of the country; the land remaining to the Natives, as distinguished from what they have sold to the Crown; the Native reserves in alienated blocks; the principal villages, and the main lines of road in the Province.

With regard to the reserves I have to report that, as will be seen from the map, they form but a small percentage of the area sold.

The Makahua Reserve (No. 5 on map), half of Pakowhai (No. 7), one section of 200 acres, eleven of 100 acres each, and one of fifty acres at Tikokino (Nos. 13 and 14) and Rangaika (No. 19), are the only portions of the reserves which are granted, or promised to be granted to individuals for their separate use.

The only land which was given back to the Natives after their title had been extinguished, and for the general use, instead of to individuals, was a block of 700 acres at Tikokino (No. 14 on map). Of this quantity 300 acres were promised at the time of purchase, and appear in the deed as a condition of sale. The remaining 400 acres were afterwards added by Governor Gore Browne, on its being represented to His Excellency that the original acreage was insufficient to maintain the population.

All the other reserves shown on the map come under subsection 2 of section 3 of "The Native Lands Act, 1866."

Of these the Natives have sold absolutely to the Government Manukaroa (No. 6), Tukuwaru (No. 11), Puketitiri (No. 23), and Kohenuakau (No. 18), and part of Pourerere (No. 8); and they have sold absolutely to private individuals Waipukurau (No. 9), Rangaika (No. 19), Awanga (No. 21), and Roro o Kuri (No. 22). Those that remain to them are let, I believe without exception, to European tenants at fair rents, and for periods not in any case exceeding twenty-one years.

Unfortunately for the rising generation many of these reserves were passed through the Native Lands Court prior to the 8th of October last, and so have missed coming under "The Native Lands Act, 1866." To show how much this is to be regretted, and what a misfortune it would have been had all the reserves remained alienable, it is only necessary to say that in the case of almost every alienable reserve yet unsold, negotiations are in progress for its sale, and these are being prosecuted with vigour the greater in proportion to the paucity of other land owned by the grantees. This is easily intelligible: a man who owns large tracts of land from which he derives a revenue more or less capable of supporting him in the habits of luxury and idleness to which the Asiatic temperament of the Maori naturally inclines him, feels but little temptation to part with the small pieces which, from being in the heart of settlement, have acquired an exceptional value; whereas another who, perhaps, has sold nearly every acre he possessed, and sometimes a bit of his neighbour's as well, is easily tempted to let his valuable reserve go at a price far beyond his wildest dreams of ten years ago, which will nevertheless not only leave him a pauper in a country where parish rates and unions are as yet unknown, but will turn his offspring into a race of thieves and vagabonds on the face of the earth.

I most earnestly trust, therefore, that His Excellency's Government will not relax in any case the wise and salutary restrictions upon the alienability of reserves in this Province which are imposed by the Act of 1866.

There are no reserves or grants of land in the Province for religious or charitable purposes.

There is one estate of 7397 acres granted as an educational endowment. This estate is comprised in three grants of contiguous properties, of which two were ceded by the Maoris to the Crown under the provisions of "The Native Reserves Act, 1856," and the third is a free gift of Crown Lands promised by Sir George Grey, and granted by Colonel Gore Browne. These grants are made in favour of the Bishop of New Zealand, who has conveyed them to trustees appointed by the General Synod of the United Church of England and Ireland in New Zealand. As the trust upon which the land given by the Maoris is granted differs from that affecting the free gift from the Crown, I have extracted from the grants the words describing the trusts, which are as follow, the first two being in relation to the lands granted by the Maoris, and the third to that granted by the Crown:—

(1.) Grant, dated 10th June, 1857, 1745 acres, to George Augustus, Bishop of New Zealand, and his successors, "upon trust as an endowment for a school to be maintained at Te Aute, in the District of Ahuriri aforesaid, for the benefit of the aboriginal inhabitants of New Zealand."

(2.) Grant, same date, 1408 acres, same trust.

(3.) Grant, dated 7th July, 1857, 4244 acres, same grantee, "upon trust as an endowment for a school to be maintained in the District of Ahuriri aforesaid for the education of children of our subjects of both races in New Zealand."

Thus the first two deeds grant 3153 acres to endow a school "at Te Aute," for "the benefit," which may be educational or pecuniary, of the "aboriginal inhabitants," not of the district where the land lies, but "of New Zealand;" while the third deed grants 4244 acres, by far the most valuable part of the property, to endow a school, not at Te Aute, but anywhere "in the District of Ahuriri aforesaid," which district is undefined, "for the education of children of our subjects of both races in New Zealand."