

Section 78.—That effect should be given to request of petitioners, to the extent of shortening the time in which a rehearing may be applied for from six months to three months. Under this head, the Committee would also call attention to the extraordinary powers which by section 58 are given to the Governor in Council, of ordering a rehearing at any time, without regard to any transactions affecting the land which may have taken place subsequent to the issue of the Crown grant.

Section 106.—That the law in respect to taking lands for roads and railways should be made the same in the case of Maoris as of Europeans.

17th August, 1874.

REPORT on the PETITION of MOHI TAWHAI and Others.

THE petitioners allege that they are dissatisfied with "The Native Land Act, 1873," and draw special attention to three points:—

1. The purchase by Government of land before the title is decided by the Court.
2. The expense of working the Act.
3. The length of time required before the title to a block of land is definitely determined.

With regard to No. 1, your Committee have the honor to report that they have come to the following resolution:—

"That it is not expedient that money should be paid by the Government by way of advance to Natives on account of their lands until they are satisfied as to who are the real owners thereof."

Your Committee having already reported on two other petitions praying for amendment and repeal of certain sections of "The Native Land Act, 1873," do not consider it necessary to make any remarks on Nos. 2 and 3.

20th August, 1874.

REPORT on the PETITIONS of KINGI MAHAUARIKI and Others, of PAURO TAHURIWAKA and Others, of HOANI M. HERETAUNGA and Others, of ERUERA TE UREMUTU and Others, and of HORI TAIAWHIO and Others.

THE whole of these petitions come from the Arawa people, and are almost identical in language and terms. Petitioners complain that the Government has tied up their lands in such a manner that they cannot sell or lease to any one but the Government, and they ask that this restriction be removed.

It appears that the lands of the Arawa have not been proclaimed as a district under "The Native Land Act, 1873," and in consequence, the Queen's pre-emptive right has practically been revived for the time being, and all leases or sales to private persons are illegal.

Three important chiefs of the Arawa, viz. Wiremu Mache Rangikaheke, Te Pokiha, and Hapeta, have come to Wellington for the express purpose of supporting the prayer of the petitions, and of laying the tribal grievances before Parliament.

The representations made by those chiefs to this Committee may be briefly summed up as follows:—

"The Arawa people have from the foundation of the colony consistently refused to lease or sell their lands; and while all the other great tribes have divested themselves of the greater portion of their tribal lands, the Arawa country has remained almost untouched in the hands of the aboriginal owners. When the Native Land Court was established, the tribe refused to take advantage of it for a long time, but ultimately, upon the repeated assurances of the Government that the survey and investigation of the titles to their lands would not facilitate leases or sales, they allowed one or two pieces to be surveyed and put through the Court. At once trouble and confusion arose. Men of no standing in the tribe began to lease or sell without the knowledge or consent of the acknowledged leaders of the people. The result was, that at subsequent sittings of the Court no lands were allowed to be put through. Then the tribe complained to the Government, and asked that their lands should be entirely tied up, so that in future no sales or leases could take place. The Government did this, but at the same time land-buyers and surveyors were sent into the district on Government account, and commenced leasing, selling, and surveying on all sides.

"The Government is still persisting in this course, and their agents are adopting the old system which in days gone by led to trouble and bloodshed; for, in their eagerness to acquire lands, they are negotiating with and paying moneys to men of inferior rank, despite the protests and remonstrances of the principal chiefs.

"The chiefs are now willing to allow lands to be taken upon lease to the extent of the moneys already paid; they decline to confirm any sales of freehold; they complain that Government is dealing with land before investigation of title; and they ask that the land-buyers should be withdrawn, and that no further attempts should be made to purchase or lease their lands."

The Committee are of opinion—1. That considerable weight should be given to an expression of opinion on the part of the Arawa people which appears to be almost unanimous.

2. That while the Committee refrain from expressing an opinion on the question of stopping all leases or sales whatsoever in the Arawa country, they are of opinion that at least the existing restrictions should be removed, and the Native owners be left at liberty to dispose of their lands to the best advantage.

25th August, 1874.

REPORT on the PETITION of ROTA RANGIHARO and Others, members of the Arawa Tribe.

THIS petition is directly opposite in its prayer to the prayer of the other Arawa petitions previously reported on. It approves of the Government only being allowed to purchase or lease Native lands, and asks that private persons be not allowed to enter their district for the purpose of negotiating for land.