

1877.

NEW ZEALAND.

## NATIVE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE.

REPORT ON PETITION OF TE HAPUKU AND 168 OTHERS, TOGETHER WITH MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

THE petitioners state that more than fifteen years ago the chiefs and people of Te Aute, in Hawke's Bay, gave between three and four thousand acres of land to be invested in trustees for the establishment and maintenance of a school for the benefit of the Maori tribes, and that Sir George Grey, the then Governor of the colony, set apart for the same purpose an adjoining block of land, making in all seven thousand five hundred acres. The petitioners go on to say that in 1855 a school was started by the Rev. S. Williams, but that, owing to management which they consider objectionable, the attendance decreased until the school had to be closed; that within the last three years the school has been reopened, but that the children attending are mostly from tribes at a distance, which the petitioners consider wrong, as the land was intended to be set apart for the benefit of the Ahuriri Natives.

The petitioners further allege that the rent paid by the Rev. S. Williams has been insufficient, and they suggest that the land should be divided into smaller blocks and let by auction, so that a fair rent might be obtained without concealment; and they pray that means may be adopted for securing generally better management for the future.

I am directed to report as follows:—

That the Committee have inquired into the allegations made in this petition with greater care than might have been necessary had it not been for the unusual interest which appears to be taken locally in the subject. They have examined as witnesses Mr. Takamoana, M.H.R.; Mr. Henare Matua, of Hawke's Bay; Mr. Grace, Native Interpreter, of Hawke's Bay; and the Rev. Mr. Williams, who is in charge of the Te Aute School. The Committee have also attentively perused the printed report of the evidence on the same subject taken during the present session by a Select Committee of the Legislative Council, and have moreover carefully considered the valuable report on the Te Aute Native School or College Trust Estate made by a Royal Commission in 1869, which, together with the evidence taken, is published in the Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives of that year. The following extract from the report of the Royal Commission referred to, gives a clear idea of the condition of the Trust in 1869:—

"The Trusts of the four grants, comprising in all 7,799 acres of land (since slightly altered in extent and boundary by exchanges) for the Te Aute Native School or College, appear to have been accepted upon the understanding that a school would be erected upon part of the estate at the expense of the Government; that a sum of £500 would be granted by the Government for the purchase of sheep; and that a certain allowance of at least £300 per annum would be granted by the Government towards the maintenance of the school, payment of a schoolmaster, and improvements of the estate. The school was not so erected. The £500, on account of the high price at the time, sufficed to purchase 250 ewes only. The annual grant was continued for the years 1854 to 1859 inclusive. During these years a school was maintained; the attendance at which, though small, was as considerable as under the circumstances stated (*see* evidence of the Rev. S. Williams, p. 4) it would have been reasonable to expect (*see*, also, report of Mr. Henry Robert Russell, Appendix to Journals of House of Representatives for 1862, E. 4, p. 31). Upon the cessation of the annual grants (practically in 1859), the estate producing no income applicable to the support of a school, and having sustained a severe loss by fire, the school was discontinued. The object of the management since has been to improve the property until it should be capable of producing an income in some measure adequate to the support of a school. The annual profits beyond those which have accumulated in the form of improvements have been insufficient, after payment of current expenses and interest, to repay the moneys advanced, and leave a debt due from the estate at the end of the year 1868 amounting to the sum of £767 7s. 1d. The annual value of the estate has been increased from £10 in 1853, to between £500 and £600 at the present time. The sheep have increased to the number of 6,137 at the muster in 1868; and it is clearly shown that the improvements of the property have been judiciously effected.

"It will, nevertheless, be apparent that, while the object of the management—the rendering the estate productive of an available income—has been nearly attained, the children of the Native donors of the land have grown up to maturity, deriving little or no benefit from the Trust. This has led to complaints from donors and representatives of donors, having some show of reason in them."