

1879.

## NEW ZEALAND.

## MAORI PRISONERS AT MOUNT COOK PRISON.

(REPORT BY MR. MACKAY.)

*Laid on the Table by the Hon. Mr. Sheehan, with the leave of the House.*

Mr. J. MACKAY to the Hon. the NATIVE MINISTER.

SIR,—

Wellington, 29th July, 1879.

I have the honor to inform you that the palisading around the Mount Cook Prison is nearly completed. The total cost of the whole of the works, including repair and alteration of buildings, gas- and water-fittings, and gravelling the gaol-yard, will be about £750.

The Natives, with the exception of a few suffering from coughs and colds, are in good health; and there is no doubt, if the sanitary arrangements for drainage now in progress are carried out, there will be but little danger of sickness of serious character arising.

The prisoners are now very quiet and well-behaved. The action of Colonel Reader and Mr. Woodward, Visiting Justices, in sentencing Te Iki and Tamati Kuku to seven days' solitary confinement at Wellington Gaol, and fifteen others of the Ngatiruanui Tribe to two days' confinement in cells on bread and water, as punishment for insubordination and general disobedience of the gaol regulations, has had a most salutary effect, and I now find all orders promptly obeyed.

I frequently converse with the prisoners on their situation and prospects. The Ngatiawa state plainly that "they joined Te Whiti because they could get no land satisfactorily reserved for them; that the absurd decision of the Compensation Court, that they had no *locus standi* because they were not in possession of the land in 1840, had been to a certain extent set aside by the Hon. J. C. Richmond and Sir D. McLean when holding the office of Native Minister, by those gentlemen promising them permanent reserves sufficient for their use and future requirements; and had these arrangements being carried out they would have remained loyal to the Government. Several of them say now they would desert Te Whiti if they received adequate reserves.

The Taranaki Tribe have stronger faith in Te Whiti, and says he will eventually arrange all their affairs satisfactorily. Their ground of complaint is, that land formerly verbally surrendered to them by Mr. Parris under instructions from the Government, situated between the Taungatara and Mototi streams, and between the Hangatahua River and the Waiwerenui Stream, have not been placed on a satisfactory footing as regards title, the Native Land Court having no power to investigate their claims until the Proclamation under the New Zealand Settlements Act, by which the land was confiscated, is rescinded by notice published in the *Government Gazette*. They also express considerable dissatisfaction as to the uncertain tenure of the Parihaka Block, which is between the two pieces above alluded to. They say Mr. Commissioner Parris acknowledged its withdrawal from confiscation by asking Te Whiti on three or four occasions "whether he had any objection to the construction of the main road and telegraph line through it from Opunake to Stoney River (Hangatahua)." Also that Major Brown, as Civil Commissioner, interviewed Te Whiti as to the construction of a lighthouse at Te Ikaroa (Cape Egmont). They therefore consider the land to be their property, and confiscation to have been waived by the official action thus taken. It is probable that a satisfactory arrangement could be made with the Taranaki Tribe by judicious management and conciliation. The Ngamahanga people under Motu, who occupy the block between Stoney River (Hangatahua) and Waiwerenui, are well disposed, and do not acknowledge the authority of Te Whiti although forming a portion of his tribe (Taranaki).

The prisoners of the Ngatiruanui Tribe have the most unbounded and fanatical reliance on Te Whiti and his supreme authority. They deem themselves martyrs to his cause, and profess to feel elated at punishment being inflicted upon them. They feel averse to discussing the land question, as they stoutly maintain that Te Whiti will deliver them from the bonds of the Europeans, destroy their oppressors by supernatural means, and then peace will be restored to the whole earth. A few of the more rational among them say that their complaint is, the lands

were never conquered and held by Europeans; that Mr. Parris firstly, and secondly the late Sir Donald McLean, offered them money compensation at the rate of 5s. per acre for all the lands in the neighbourhood of Waimate Plains retained by the Crown, and promised them reserves wheresoever they were occupying and cultivating the land. They deem this also as a waiver of the Crown's claim to the confiscated lands.

I may here state, outside this report, that, from conversations I had with Titokowaru and others at Okaiawa, I have come to the conclusion that no disturbance would have arisen if the Native and Survey Departments had been acting in accord, and the controlling power been vested in the former. Titokowaru states "he asked the interpreter to stop the survey at a certain point, as he wished a piece of land to be reserved." The interpreter (Thompson) endeavoured to carry out Titokowaru's wishes, and suggested to Mr. Finnerty to stay progress in that direction; but he, having his orders from the Survey Department, continued his survey through land adjacent to Titokowaru's house, and over his grass and other cultivations.

Considerable discussion has taken place as to the probability of the Maori prisoners now confined at Mount Cook being able to escape. I am of opinion that, if proper precaution is taken by erecting small platforms and sentry-boxes at the opposite angles of the external palisading, and if the outer fence is lighted up at night, and properly disciplined men are employed as guards, there is not the least occasion to fear that they will be able to regain their liberty.

In my opinion it would be a most serious disaster to the colony if any of the Maori prisoners now in custody should effect their escape, or even be set free by due course of law, as Te Whiti and the remainder of his fanatical followers would at once set it down to his supernatural power, and would be strengthened in their belief in the infallibility of his prophecies.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Native Minister, Wellington.

JAMES MACKAY.

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