

1883.

NEW ZEALAND.

THE GRANTING OF REPRESENTATIVE INSTITUTIONS TO THE COLONY

(DESPATCHES RELATIVE TO).

Return to an Order of the House of Representatives, dated 3rd day of August, 1882.

“That there be laid before this House printed copies of all despatches (with enclosures thereto) between the Secretary of State for the Colonies and the Governor of New Zealand, prior to the passing of the Constitution Act, on the subject of the granting of representative institutions for this colony.”—(*Hon. Sir J. Hall.*)

FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE TO THE GOVERNOR.

No. 1.

COPY of a DESPATCH from Lord STANLEY to Lieutenant-Governor GREY.

(Separate.)

SIR,—

Downing Street, 27th June, 1845.

You will see in the late parliamentary discussions on the subject of New Zealand some subjects have been prominently noticed, on which it may be desirable that I should address to you some further explanations. . . . Another subject to which your attention will have to be directed will be the demand which will probably be made for the extension of representative government to New Zealand. By representative government, I mean the constitution of an elective Assembly, with general powers of legislation for the colony. I should be very glad, if I could think that, in the present condition of the colony, it was practicable to adopt this course; but the objections to it appear to me at present to be insuperable. The first of these naturally arises from the position of the Native inhabitants, whom I consider it would be equally impossible to admit to the exercise of the franchise, and unjust to subject to the control of a popularly-elected body, not only not representing their interests, but in many respects having interests altogether opposed to theirs. But an additional and very serious difficulty presents itself in the small number and extreme dispersion of the European inhabitants. The distances between the various settlements are so great, and the means of communicating between them are so restricted, that even if it were possible to find in each of them persons properly qualified to represent the interests of their several constituencies, such persons would not have the inclination or the leisure to resort to the capital, and abandon their own pursuits, for the length of time which would be requisite for the sitting of the Legislature. For these among other reasons I think the admission of the representative system is, for the present, impracticable; and I would, therefore, have you direct your attention and that of the colonists to the formation of local municipal bodies, with considerable powers of taxation for local purposes, and of making the necessary by-laws, leaving the more general powers of legislation vested in the Council as at present constituted. Looking to the peculiar circumstances of New Zealand, I should not object to extend the authority of those local bodies over a considerable district of the surrounding country, of the extent of which you would in each case be the judge, having in view the local circumstances, and especially the facilities of forming the districts so as not to include any large number of Natives. Those who might happen to be interspersed with the Europeans in small numbers would, of course, be admitted to all the privileges and subject to all the restraints and obligations of the local laws and regulations. On those bodies I think you will find it advisable to throw, as far as possible, the burden of so much of the expenditure of your Government as can fairly be considered to be of a local character, thus endeavouring to obviate objections which might be raised to the disproportion between the taxation of any particular locality and the benefit derived to it in the expenditure of the public revenue.

I have, &c.,
STANLEY.