

1888.

NEW ZEALAND.

NATIVE DISTURBANCE AT POROTI, WHANGAREI

(REPORT BY J. S. CLENDON, ESQ., R.M., ON).

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

The RESIDENT MAGISTRATE, Whangarei, to the UNDER-SECRETARY, Native Department.

SIR,—

Resident Magistrate's Office, Whangarei, 21st July, 1888.

In accordance with the request contained in your telegram of this morning in relation to the Poroti disturbance I beg to report as follows:—

That somewhere about the 14th or 16th January last these Natives agreed to sell the royalty for digging gum on the Raraponga Block, adjoining the Waitomotomo, to Mr. Rawnsley, of Poroti, for the sum of £300, all parties, I am informed, agreeing thereto. A meeting of the Uriroroi hapu was called, and the money was paid, in the presence of them all, to eight persons elected by the meeting to represent them, and to sign a receipt for the sum paid (£300), which they did. According to Maori custom the principal owners of the land sat round, the money being, at the request of all, handed to Taurau Kukupa, as the chief and head of the hapu. Taurau handed it to the person next in rank—Matu Arama (now dangerously wounded); and he to Rotohiko Rako, who, instead of passing it to the others for final return to Taurau and division, kept the bag of money, got up, and walked away, leaving Taurau and the others to their cogitations. I was informed that the next day Matu Arama offered Taurau and three out of five subdivisions of the tribe with him interested in the matter £100. This sum was refused, as the party required £180, as they represented three-fifths of the tribe. The consequence was that Matu Arama took the money away and divided it amongst the people with him at Tokitoki, their pa. It appears that at this time Pomare Kingi was present, and, enraged at being dealt with in such a manner, said, "Very well, keep the money, and we will fight for it." The emanation of this was the arming of the two parties. A few days afterwards, on the night of the 19th January, I was called upon to prevent a collision between these people and Taurau's men, headed by Tito Papa. I succeeded in preventing this, and obtained the consent of both parties to the arbitration of the dispute by a Native Committee—not the legal Committee. Accordingly, a few days after, Hone Mohi Tawhai, Rimi te Tai, Eru Nehua, Wiki Pirihi, and Hoterene te Rangaihi met at the Poroti, and, after a two days' sitting and taking evidence, they decided that Eru Hiri's party refund the sum of £200 to the subdivisions of the hapu under Taurau. This they at once refused to do; said they had spent the money and would refund nothing, as Hira te Tuko, the Poroti chief, and his people had leased some gum land a year or two previously, and kept all the money to pay their debts. These people then strengthened their pa, and surreptitiously purchased some ten or twelve Snider rifles, with ammunition, in Auckland, as I had stopped all such supply from the dealers in my district.

About a fortnight subsequently I received a message from Hone Mohi Tawhai asking me to meet him at the Tokitoki on a certain day, when he and the Mahurehure chiefs would be there to remove Eru Hiri and his family to Waima. I accordingly visited Tokitoki on the appointed day. Found that Hone Mohi Tawhai had not come, but the Kakaho chief Riwhi Tete Pokai, and Wiraha Arama Karaka and Te Mokaraka, the son and brother of the late Waima chief Arama Karaka Pi, had arrived. I then held a long consultation with these chiefs, and Manuera, the prophet, Eru Hiri, and the other principal parties on that side. They all agreed in the presence of the stranger chiefs that the land in respect of which the money was in dispute should be surveyed and put through the Native Land Court. At the same time the civil summonses from the four principals on Taurau's side for the sum awarded by the Arbitration Committee, £50 each, in all £200, were served upon them. Considering the matter thus far settled, I left them, understanding that the visitors would leave for their homes next morning. I heard they did so afterwards. During the next day I received a letter from Eru Hiri and the others revoking their consent of the previous day to the survey and adjudication of the land by the Native Land Court.

The date for hearing the cases came on, but the defendants did not appear, and judgment in default was recorded against the defendants for the sums claimed, with the costs, by myself and the Assessors Hone te Horo and Riwi Taikawa. I informed the plaintiffs that they could remove these judgments into the Supreme Court under the Enforcement of Judgment Act, and get orders against the shares of the defendants in the Maunu and Waitomotomo blocks of land.