

to proceed to Akaroa, in pursuance of the notice given, in order to explain to the Natives who might attend the reason for postponement.

Notice was then given of a sitting to be held in Dunedin on the 16th February, for the purpose of the inquiry into the Otakou and Murihiku purchases. The Commissioners accordingly sat *pro forma* at Akaroa on the 2nd February, and adjourned to Christchurch, where we sat from the 5th to the 10th February, obtaining important evidence from the Rev. J. W. Stack on the subject of Native reserves, schools, and other matters.

From Christchurch we proceeded to Dunedin, and, on the application of the counsel, adjourned the sitting to Port Chalmers, where we sat from the 18th to the 20th, examining a number of Native witnesses, and receiving the evidence of Judge Symonds, the officer employed by the Government in negotiating the purchase of the Otakou Block in 1844.

The Commission next sat at Waikouaiti from the 26th February to the 4th March, and took the evidence of a large number of witnesses, adjourning thence to sit on the 8th at Christchurch, where we hoped to obtain further evidence from the Rev. Mr. Stack, but were unable to do so in consequence of his absence on his clerical duties.

The Commission proceeded from Christchurch to Akaroa, where it sat from the 12th to the 17th March, taking important Native and European evidence; and from Akaroa we went to Riverton, finding it necessary to do so in order to obtain evidence, which we considered of importance in connection with the inquiry into the Murihiku purchase, from persons who could not come to Waikouaiti.

The Commission sat at Riverton on the 24th and 25th March, adjourning thence to sit again in Christchurch on the 2nd April.

At Christchurch more evidence was taken; and it was our intention to obtain evidence there from the Hon. W. Rolleston and the Hon. Major Richmond, but in consequence of arrangements made for the purpose falling through we were prevented from doing so. From Christchurch we adjourned on the 5th April to Wellington, to sit again on the 12th.

On the 13th April we received a letter from the Hon. the Native Minister, Mr. Bryce, suggesting the suspension of our proceedings until after the meeting of Parliament. Copies of that letter, with our reply thereto, and Mr. Bryce's rejoinder, we beg to enclose herewith for your Excellency's information.

Considering it necessary that we should meet to collate the evidence taken and decide upon what further evidence we should obtain, we determined to adjourn to Auckland, to meet on the 10th May. We met accordingly on that date, and found that the work connected with the collation of the evidence and putting into shape the records of our proceedings occupied a longer time than we anticipated. On the 16th June we adjourned, to meet again on the 19th July to complete the work.

On the 28th June we were informed, in reply to our requisitions for imprest advances on account of expenses, "that the Government cannot authorise any further advances on account of the Commission;" and subsequently an account, made up partly of items of expenses incurred for which a refund was asked, was presented by one of the Commissioners and refused payment with a similar intimation.

We have to apologize to your Excellency for the infliction of the above tedious narrative; but it appeared to us necessary to enable your Excellency to understand our position, with a view to such steps being taken as your Excellency may seem fit.

We also feel called upon to notice remarks made by the Hon. the Native Minister, Mr. Bryce, in his place in the House of Representatives, on the 2nd July ultimo, reported in *Hansard*, page 687. Mr. Bryce states that he had on many occasions applied to the Commissioners desiring to receive information as to when they were likely to make a report; but could never get any reply. We are not aware of any application or question put to us, either in writing or verbally, to which a reply was not given at once. The correspondence, copies of which accompany this letter, shows that replies were given to the only letters received by us on the subject. Mr. Bryce further states that he expressed to one of the Commissioners his surprise that no interim report had been received from them. On the 30th June the Commissioners referred to had an interview with Mr. Bryce on further imprest supplies for the Commission. Mr. Bryce expressed his opinion that it was not likely the House would vote a further supply, and, further, that the Government did not intend to ask for such a vote. Mr. Bryce then inquired why an interim report had not been sent in, and was answered that such a report could only be made at the expense of the final report, and that the final report would be sent in when the Commissioners had finished taking the necessary evidence, which might probably be done in about three months; and, in reply to a question from Mr. Bryce as to when the Commission were likely to send in their report, he was answered thus: "In about three months. I will go to Auckland and consult my colleague on the question of an interim report, but I have objections to any such report, as it could only be made at the expense of the final report."

With reference to presenting an *ad interim* report, we are at a loss to understand the object or advantage of doing so. The inquiry we have been directed to make relates to the past. We have to ascertain facts connected with transactions long since passed and concluded, and we have not, as in the case of the Native Commission on the West Coast, recommendations to make, the carrying-out of which might affect a final report.

With respect to the expenditure incurred, we feel that to be a question with which we are not called upon to deal. We accepted our Commission without reference to any question of the cost of carrying it out. That our expenditure has not been wasteful or extravagant the accounts will, we doubt not, sufficiently show. The amount expended may appear large, but it should be borne in mind that the work necessarily involved considerable outlay or expense. The Commissioners had to pay their secretary and shorthand reporter, also travelling-expenses for the whole party—passages by steamer, fares by railway, &c.—expenses of witnesses to a partial extent, hire of rooms, and numberless other expenses inseparable from such a work as devolved upon them, as it did, to hold