

REPORT.

To His Excellency the Right Honourable William Hillier, Earl of Onslow, of Onslow in the County of Salop; Viscount Cranley, of Cranley in the County of Surrey; Baron Onslow, of Onslow in the County of Salop, and of West Clandon in the County of Surrey; Baron Cranley of Imbercourt; Baronet; Knight Grand Cross of the Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George; Governor and Commander-in-Chief in and over Her Majesty's Colony of New Zealand and its Dependencies, and Vice-Admiral of the same.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

In accordance with the powers and instructions contained in your Excellency's Commission, we have considered the matters committed to us, and now have the honour to present our report thereon:—

In the performance of our duty we have traversed nearly the whole of the North Island. We have held sittings in Gisborne, Auckland, Cambridge, Kawakawa, Waimate North, Te Ahuahu, Whangarei, Otorohanga, New Plymouth, Parihaka, Hawera, Wanganui, Palmerston North, Danevirke, Waipawa, Napier, Greytown, Otaki, and Wellington.

We have examined a large number of persons, both Europeans and Natives, whom we thought likely to give useful evidence. The leading Native chiefs have met us in the presence of their people, and have generally spoken freely and openly upon the different subjects submitted to them. All the principal tribes, or representatives from them, the Ngapuhi, Ngatipaoa, Waikato, Ngaiterangi, Te Arawa, Te Urewera, Ngatituwharetoa, Ngatimaniapoto, Ngatiporou, Rongowhakaata, Ngatikahungunu, Ngatitama, Ngatiawa, Taranaki, Ngatiruanui, Ngarauru, Ngatihau, Ngatiraukawa, Ngatiapa, Muaupoko, Rangitane, and Ngatitoa have thus given expression to their own wants and wishes, and their ideas concerning the Native-land laws and the Native Land Courts. A map of the North Island is appended, showing the route pursued and places visited by the Commissioners, and the respective boundaries of the original tribal lands of the Natives; also a copy of the Treaty of Waitangi, and of sections 71 and 72 of "The Constitution Act, 1852" (15 and 16 Vict., c. 72), relative to Native lands and Native local self-government.

We were everywhere received with a cordial welcome. Each tribe was eager to express their gratitude to the Governor for thus sending Commissioners to visit them and to ascertain their wishes. This entirely new departure filled them with hope, and they spoke always as men who believed that the Government really desired to ascertain their grounds of complaint, in order to apply a remedy.

Those Europeans who are now most conversant with the history of Native-land administration, and many of the leading members of the legal profession, have given their testimony and assistance.

Recognising the very great importance of the task we were called upon to perform, and the magnitude of the interests, moral, social, and material, which are at stake, we have endeavoured to exhaust all available sources of information and to elicit opinions from those qualified by experience to speak with authority. We have also searched the records of Parliament for information. Conscious of much that is imperfect in our work, and knowing the wide diversities of opinion existing upon the question of Native administration, we yet trust that the results of our labours may commend themselves to your Excellency's judgment, and may be found useful by the Legislature of the colony.

TWO QUESTIONS.

There are, by your Excellency's Commission, five questions given to us to answer, which we submit may be fairly condensed into two, thus:—

1. What are the origin, nature, and extent of the present defects (a) in the Native-land laws, (b) in the alienation of interests in Native land, and (c) the Native Land Courts?
2. What are the principles on which the Native lands should henceforth be administered, so as to benefit both Natives and Europeans and promote settlement?

In discussing these questions it is necessary to consider the various methods of dealing with the Natives for their lands, and the legislation which has taken place for the purpose of determining the Native title, and of controlling the mode of alienating lands when the title is so determined. A statement of the historic facts and a summary of the evidence will contain clear and explicit answers to the questions contained in the first category.