

The chaotic state of things found in this department of society is almost entirely due to erroneous legislation. Parliament is responsible, and Parliament alone can apply the remedy.

VALIDATION OF INCOMPLETE TITLES.

The weight of opinion is decidedly adverse to direct validation by statute of any special cases, even the most deserving. On the other hand it is agreed, both by Maoris and Europeans, that, where no question of merits arises and no contention exists, the Native Land Titles Court to be created should have full power to validate titles. It is equally decided that such Court should inquire into all cases of dispute, and, where neither fraud nor illegality is alleged or proved, give judgment on the merits—not referring the matter to Parliament, but giving a final decision in accordance with the facts and the law. Where evidence of fraud or illegal practices is tendered, the Court shall give no decision, but shall report the whole matter to Parliament, with its opinion thereon. And it is a belief, strongly expressed, that the members of the Court should be appointed by name for a certain term of office, in the statute creating it.

In closing our remarks upon the authority of the Parliament, and the propriety of that authority being exercised, we desire to emphasize our opinion that the assent and assistance of the Natives is absolutely essential to the final success of our proposals.

In addition to the many and serious difficulties which evidently exist, complications beyond human foresight must and will occur, demanding patience and tact on the part of the Europeans, and voluntary aid and self-denial on the part of the Native people. To secure this aid the Government and the Legislature should, we suggest, inspire the Maoris with confidence both in their justice and judgment. If a ready redress be afforded to their just complaints, a generous sympathy be shown to their proper aspirations, and a wise selection made of officials to act with and for them, no reasonable fear need exist as to the result. If the confidence of the chiefs and people of the Native race be gained and built upon a strong foundation, success will, no doubt, attend the effort.

CONCLUSION.

FRAMEWORK.

Past.

1. Native Land Titles Court for dealing with past disputes.

Future.

2. Committees for each block.
3. District Committee or Tribal Committee.
4. District Judge and District Commissioner, who shall be also Chairman of every Committee, and responsible for distribution of moneys among owners.

Native Land Board corporate body with common seal, to give all titles, to act where owners or Committees refuse or neglect to act, with same power as owners or Committees.

Generally to act for Maoris. All rights of possession and ownership to be exercised on behalf of owners by Native Land Board.

To be supported by a percentage charged on all Maori lands.

For Ascertainment of Title.

1. Native Committee of claimants.
2. Native Committee of district.
3. Judge and Commissioner of district, with Assessor from other district.

For Alienation.

1. Committee of block to decide.
2. Commissioner to examine and report.
3. Native Land Board to give titles.

It will be here convenient to remember that the Commission is appointed for the purpose of making inquiry into and suggestions upon the following matters: that is to say,—

1. The operation of the existing laws relating to the alienation and disposition of interests in Native lands within the colony.

2. The general constitution, practice, and procedure of the Native Land Court so far as may be necessary to ascertain the operation of the existing laws, and in what respects the constitution, practice, and procedure of the said Court could be simplified or amended, or whether the same should be reconstituted.