

Grey in 1877. Sir George Grey proposed a powerful Commission to deal finally with all such cases. He requested Mr. George Higinbotham, of Melbourne, now Chief Justice of Victoria, to preside at a Court to be constituted; and that gentleman consented. When the Grey Government were defeated, and resigned, in 1879, their successors did not proceed with it. Parliament has, indeed, of late years rather expressed a desire that reports should be made, leaving all decisions with the Legislature. We would respectfully suggest that there must be finality in these important and distressing proceedings. And we are of opinion that, if a wise selection of Judges be made, their determination upon all points is likely to be more impartial than a vote of Parliament, save where fraud or illegality is alleged.

The costs of this Court and of all proceedings in it should be a charge upon the lands brought before it.

QUESTION NO. 2, AND REMEDY SUGGESTED.

Native Land Court.

The constitution of the Native Land Court is too formal and cumbrous, while its practice and procedure is unsatisfactory, and as at present constituted is condemned both by Maoris and Europeans.

Remedy suggested.

The Native Land Court should be remodelled. (1.) It should consist of a Chief Judge, five District Judges, and five District Commissioners or administrative officers. (2.) All lands brought before it, either for original hearing or partition—partial or complete—should be first reported on by the District Committee and the Commissioner. (3.) The report should contain the tribal and hapu boundaries of the block, and the lists of owners. (4.) If the report be not objected to, the title to be entered in accordance therewith. (5.) If objected to, the District Judge and two Assessors, one for each side, to determine the points in dispute. (6.) If the parties be not satisfied with the determination of the District Court, the Native Land Board may, if it think fit, order a rehearing, which shall be held before the Chief Judge, one other District Judge, and two other Assessors. (7.) The Commissioners shall be Chairmen *ex officio* of every Committee in the district, and shall generally act with and for the Committees. (8.) The Commissioner shall pay all rents or other moneys arising from dealing with lands in his district to the parties entitled to receive the same. (9.) All questions of law affecting the Maoris only should be decided by the Native Land Court and Native Land Board. (10.) No Judge or Commissioner should be removed from office without the sanction of the Native Land Board, and then for cause assigned.

QUESTION NO. 4.—REMEDY OR PROCEEDING SUGGESTED.

I. A Native Land Board should be created as hereafter provided.

II. The Board should be a corporate body with a common seal, and plenary powers in regard to Native-land matters, save where the rights of Europeans come in question.

III. The Board should have full power to act in all things as trustee of the Native lands for the Native owners.

IV. A Committee should be appointed by the owners of each block, who should choose sufficient reserves for the people, and instruct the Native Land Board to lease or sell the balance as the case may be.

V. No individual or direct dealings should be permitted between Europeans and Maoris for or relating to land, save where land is held in severalty, or by two or more Maoris in partnership.

VI. All lands owned by Natives otherwise than in severalty or partnership should be leased under regulations somewhat similar to the Waste Lands Regulations, and titles given by the Board.

VII. All rents shall be paid into the Native Land Court of the district in which the land is situate, and shall be distributed, after proper deductions being made, by the District Commissioner among the owners of each distinct block, in accordance with schedules to be filed in the Native Land Court, showing the respective interests of the owners.

VIII. The Crown should be the only purchaser of the fee-simple.

These proposals would necessitate the repeal of the existing laws in so far as they are proposed to be altered.

NATIVE LAND BOARD.

To provide machinery for carrying into effect the leasing of lands and the many duties arising under the proposed system of management, a Board, to be called the Native Land Board, should be created.

The Native Land Board should be a corporate body, having perpetual succession and a common seal. It should be composed of six members, of whom three should be appointed