

Although it is with diffidence that we venture to make this suggestion, we do not hesitate to express our opinion that such a step would be extremely advantageous at the present time. It would give great confidence to the Native people, and it would afford considerable assistance to the members of the Legislative Council both in debate and in Committee.

We have ventured to speak without hesitation upon all the matters which fall within the scope of our Commission. It may be thought that in condemning so strongly the actions of that Parliament in which two of our number have each the honour to hold a seat we have gone beyond our duty. We do not so read your Excellency's commands. Mindful of the honour of the Crown, pledged so frequently to the Natives of New Zealand, we have endeavoured neither to aggravate nor to diminish the weight and effect of the evidence given before us, and the history of the Colony in regard to Native matters.

We have educed for your Excellency's information the opinions of the most illustrious men who have borne part in making that history. Governor Grey, Bishop Selwyn, Mr. Justice Richmond, Chief Judge Fenton, and a host of witnesses examined by us have borne testimony. To their reasonings all the Native chiefs give a willing assent. Without exception, all the tribes have in the main points of argument joined with the Europeans. There never was a more general consensus of opinion upon any subject of public comment. From Te Whiti, the man of peace, to Te Kooti, the man of war, all are of one mind. The cry of all, from the North Cape to Wellington, is this: "The past was bad: make a new and happier future."

We do not conceal from your Excellency that both Europeans and Natives, disappointed during so long a period by delusive hopes, are doubtful as to the result of this last effort. The Maoris are suspicious, the Europeans dubious. So many anticipations have been destroyed that to achieve any good result seems to many improbable.

We have not performed our duty in any perfunctory manner. Traversing this fair Island from end to end, brought into contact with both races of its people, we have recognised the wonderful possibilities with which New Zealand is endowed. It needs but the pacification of Native titles and the proper settlement of Native lands to produce a condition of great contentment and prosperity. We venture, therefore, to hope that your Excellency's Advisers will deal with this great question in a firm and impartial spirit. Thus, acting upon the lines which we have taken upon ourselves to project, laws may be enacted which will add to the honour of the Crown and insure the safety and welfare of both races of Her Majesty's subjects in New Zealand.

FINAL REMARKS. OTHER COMMISSIONS.

In framing our report we bear in mind that many Commissions have sat in the past years to report upon the subject of Native lands and Native-land disputes. From the day when Mr. Commissioner Spain, in 1843-44, commenced his labours until now questions have continually arisen demanding inquiry.

Twice during a comparatively recent period have Commissions been appointed. In 1872 Parliament, in consequence of many complaints and disputes by and with persons of the Native race as to the manner in and under which the alienation of Native lands in Hawke's Bay which had passed through the Native Land Court had taken place, created a Commission by statute. That was the Hawke's Bay Alienation Commission. Mr. Justice Richmond and Judge Maning, of "Old New Zealand," with the two well-known Native chiefs Hikairo and Te Wheoro, acted upon that occasion. The subjects of inquiry were limited to the alleged unfair dealing with Natives in Hawke's Bay. That Commission sat for many months, and elicited much valuable evidence; but its labours were not practically utilised. It is to be regretted that the earnest work performed and the valuable suggestions made by Mr. Justice Richmond did not lead to adequate practical legislation. A very serious state of affairs was revealed, but no adequate effort seems to have been made to find a remedy.

In 1880, roused by the excited and dangerous state of the Natives on the West Coast, another Commission was appointed to examine and report. The West Coast Commission enjoyed the services of Sir Dillon Bell and Sir William Fox. Their task was to find out the true state of the claims of the friendly Natives living in the confiscated territory, and the wants of those who, though once in arms against the Crown, had returned to their old homes and were living there in peace. The long and exhaustive reports made by the West Coast Commission led to action on the part of the Legislature and the Government. Although in our opinion alterations should be made, we are convinced that the original legislation