

DEAR MR. CHAMBERLAIN,—

36, Walbrook, E.C., 13th July, 1897.

I received the other day a letter from a friend of mine who is deeply interested in New Zealand enclosing me the petition of the Native contingent of the New Zealand Volunteers, addressed to Her Majesty, on the question of their reserved land in New Zealand, and yesterday Captain H. P. Tunuiarangi and Bugler Wi Tako called upon me, and I had a talk with them. Of course, I told them that as a private member of Parliament all I could do was to listen to their case, and then forward my remarks to the proper quarter, but that our Home Government here would be very chary about endeavouring in any way to interfere with the acts of a self-governing colony like New Zealand. They quite recognised this, and stated that in the hands of the present Government of New Zealand they felt they were tolerably safe, and that they hoped to have a law passed after the receipt of a practically similar petition which they intend to present to Mr. Seddon when they get back to New Zealand. They said, however, that if you, as the Colonial Secretary, could see your way to suggest to the Government of New Zealand that the gravest consideration should be given to their wishes, no doubt it would do a great deal of good. It appears from what they stated to me that the Maori tribe, although vastly diminished compared to its original strength, is now slowly increasing, but that the land is diminishing very quickly, and their fear is that, if sales and alienation are allowed to proceed at the rate they are doing now, in a very short time practically nothing will be left to the Maori, and, as they are to a very large extent an agricultural race, their employment will be gone, and they will be reduced to practical pauperism.

Of course, I only took the matter up to oblige my friend, but I was very much impressed by both of the New-Zealanders who called upon me, and they appeared very earnest in their desire to do everything according to law in the protection of their interests. I asked them if private individuals were obtaining concessions, or if the Government were forcibly alienating their property, and they said they were protected against individuals but not against the Government; but what they really complained against was that the Maoris had power to sell their property at all. As the captain said, the proportion of wise men among their tribe was no greater than in any other race, and a tempting offer by a European settler would in most cases obtain the sale of the land he was anxious to get, and that those Natives who sold did not look ahead and see the ultimate effect of their parting with their property. They particularly desire that Maoris should not be permitted to sell their land, but that it should be reserved to them for ever.

They appear to place very great confidence in your good-feeling towards native races, and are evidently willing to leave the matter in your hands. Before they left I again impressed upon them how difficult it was for a Home Government to which a self-governing colony was attached by a very slender thread to express their will if the ruling party in the colony were not willing to receive it; but I assured them that the matter would be brought before you, and would receive your very grave consideration. They are a splendid race, the Maoris, and from what the captain and his bugler told me they are improving in their social life, particularly since the New Zealand Government has prevented the sale of liquor to their women.

Pardon me troubling you, and believe me,
The Right Hon. Joseph Chamberlain, M.P., &c.

Yours, &c.,
JOHN M. DENNY.

SIR,—

Downing Street, 20th July, 1897.

I am directed by Mr. Secretary Chamberlain to acknowledge with thanks the receipt of your letter of the 13th instant on the subject of the Maori land reserves, and I am to state, in reply, that the matter is one for the exclusive consideration of the colonial Government, and that Mr. Chamberlain cannot interfere in it.

He has, however, caused a copy of your letter, with its enclosure, to be transmitted to the Right Hon. R. J. Seddon.

J. M. Denny, Esq., M.P.

I am, &c.,
JOHN BRAMSTON.

SIR,—

Downing Street, 20th July, 1897.

I am directed by Mr. Secretary Chamberlain to transmit to you the accompanying copies of a correspondence which has taken place on the subject of the Maori land reserves in New Zealand.

The Right Hon. R. J. Seddon.

I am, &c.,
JOHN BRAMSTON.

SIR,—

Hotel Cecil, London, 23rd July, 1897.

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter (15226/97) of the 20th instant, transmitting copies of a correspondence which has taken place on the subject of the Maori land reserves in New Zealand, and to request that you will convey my thanks to Mr. Secretary Chamberlain for furnishing me with the same.

It will be pleasant to Her Majesty and Mr. Chamberlain to know that we have already passed legislation under which the Crown reserves the pre-emptive right of purchasing lands from the Natives, and no alienation can take place until after inquiries have been made by a Court of competent jurisdiction as to whether or not the Native who proposes to alienate his lands has sufficient means left for his own maintenance; and that our policy has been to reserve lands for the Native race in the South Island, where, unfortunately, they disposed of most of their holdings years ago. We have, however, set apart for them some 60,000 acres of our Crown lands, on which we are at the present time engaged in settling the landless Natives.

Sir John Bramston, Colonial Office.

I am, &c.,
R. J. SEDDON.