

The Minutes of the Committee were read and confirmed.

Mr. McLean attended to give evidence. The following questions were put by the Committee:—

1. Q—What sum do you consider will be required during the current year for the purchase of Native lands? A—Not less than £50,000.

2. Q—Is that exclusive of payments for past transactions falling due within the year? A—Yes.

Q—Are your operations carried on on the supposition of leaving such a sum at your disposal? A—Not at present.

4. Is your staff and establishment constructed on such an idea? A—Partly so, but not to the full extent.

5. If no money is expended beyond what is necessary to complete outstanding purchases this year what effect would it have on the Natives? A—I should expect general dissatisfaction amongst the various tribes who are anxious to sell land.

6. Have their expectations been raised? A—They are more inclined to sell now than formerly.

7. Would such a policy then be likely to render them less willing to sell than heretofore? A—Yes, some would be entirely unwilling.

8. Q—Would it have any other evil consequence? A—It would stop, or at least retard the colonization of large parts of the Northern Island.

9. Q. Will it be calculated to create a risk of Native disturbances? A—It is almost impossible to state what the effect would be, but it would give an unfavorable impression of the European Government.

10. Have then the Natives the idea that the Government will be always ready to buy their land to any extent? A—Yes; such is their impression.

11. Q—Do they not understand that there is a limit of expenditure? A—They do not enter into the question of limit of expenditure; they only consider that they have a certain tract of land for sale, and when they offer it for sale they expect it to be bought.

By Mr. Travers:—

12. Are they aware of the law prohibiting individuals to purchase land from them? A—Yes.

13. Has this knowledge the effect of inducing them to look to Government as the purchaser? A—Yes. They consider that the Government is bound to buy, as private individuals are prohibited from purchasing.

14. Q—Do you think the relaxation of that law would be beneficial? A—So many considerations are involved that I cannot give an opinion here. I have considered the question and have formed an opinion.

By Mr. Macky:—

15. Have you furnished Government with your views on this subject? A—No; I have not been called on officially. I may state, that the large territory required by Government at the South could not be acquired by any other system than that which has been adopted.

By Mr. Crompton:—

16. Q—Will the sudden cessation of land purchases have the effect of raising the price of land hereafter? A—Certainly it will, and to a considerable extent.

17. Q—In what way? A—If a Native chief offers a district for sale at a certain price, and it is not accepted, he considers himself justified, when the land is urgently wanted by Europeans, to raise the price of such land even to the extent of what he considers it may be worth to the colonists. They are quite alive to the subject of supply and demand. The market value of land will rise with the demand.

18. Q—Where is the want of land most felt? A—In the Province of Auckland, between Auckland and the Bay of Islands; at Waikato and the Waipa; at the Thames and the Bay of Plenty.

19. Q—What class of persons is it who are waiting for land? A—The community generally, likewise many new settlers.

20. Q—Is it for agricultural or pastoral purposes? A—In this Province mostly agricultural the land is mostly better suited for that purpose.

21. Q—What is the population of the Province? A—I have not recently examined the statistics.