

New Zealand.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

ORDERED TO BE PRINTED AUGUST 10TH, 1855.

To the Honorable the House of Representatives of New Zealand, in Session assembled.

THE PETITION OF THE SUPERINTENDENT AND PROVINCIAL COUNCIL OF THE PROVINCE OF NEW PLYMOUTH.

Sheweth,

That the disturbances and bloodshed amongst the Maori population of New Plymouth are a matter of notoriety.

That your Petitioners have long since arrived unanimously at the distinct conclusion that it has become matter of urgent necessity to provide an efficient Garrison for the town of New Plymouth, and that not only the safety of this settlement, but ultimately the welfare of the whole colony are hazarded by delaying that measure.

That from the commencement of these difficulties, a strong reluctance on the part of the General Government to afford to the Settlers of New Plymouth the Protection of a body of troops has been manifest. For the purpose of enabling Your Honourable House more readily to appreciate the avowed reasons for the refusal of a military force, your Petitioners here subjoin a summary of arguments adduced by the General Government. The despatches of the Colonial Secretary have urged:—

1. That no serious result need be apprehended.
2. That the Settlers must trust to their own prudence and good conduct.
3. That the Military force in the Colony is too small to admit of the detachment of a sufficient force,
4. That the Provincial Revenue, which, it is said, must bear the cost of providing accommodation for the Troops, is insufficient for the purpose.
5. That the presence of Troops would increase the danger of the Settlers, as it would almost certainly be followed by the commencement of hostilities with the Natives.
6. That it would discourage Immigration and injure the prosperity of the Province.
7. That the Military force is required against the foreign enemy.
8. That the continuation of Native hostilities is nothing more than what was naturally to be expected.
9. That the disturbances have been confined to the natives themselves.
10. That the amount of force likely to be available for service in the locality would leave the out-settlers unprotected.
11. That the country is unfavourable for Military operations.
12. And is difficult of access by sea.
13. That the presence of Troops would tend to indispose the Natives to further Land sales.

A reference to the published correspondence in the Provincial Gazette of 7th March, will justify this statement.

That Your Petitioners do not enter upon the discussion of these reasons or of the various expedients suggested for the defence of the Settlement by His Excellency and his advisers; it is enough that both the reasons and the expedients were deliberately, and upon a personal examination, abandoned by His Excellency, on occasion of his recent visit to this settlement, as will fully appear to Your Honourable House by the communication of His Excellency through the Private Secretary, to the Superintendent, dated 7th April, 1855, and printed

with the sanction of His Excellency in the Provincial Gazette of 21st April. In that communication His Excellency declares his belief that urgent necessity exists for a force being stationed at Taranaki such as may not only protect the European Inhabitants, but support the British authority.

That since the visit of His Excellency the attitude of the Native parties has become by no means less menacing, but on the contrary a crisis is surely approaching. A collision within the limits of the settlement, perhaps even within the Town itself, between a large party of the Ngatiruanui Tribe and Rahiera's people has only been averted by great exertion on the part of the authorities, and the Natives themselves are everywhere preparing for the worst. The erection by Arama Karaka of a new Pah on the land claimed by Katatore, where Rawiri was slain, is understood as a direct challenge, not to Katatore alone, but to the whole of the powerful League opposed to Land Sales. It is an act which, according to Native custom, is one of determined hostility, and renders it, humanly speaking, a matter of certainty, that a sanguinary struggle must eventually take place, probably in the very heart of the settlement.

That notwithstanding the distinct opinion recorded by His Excellency in the Despatch above cited, no step whatever has been taken, or appears likely to be taken, for the relief of the settlement.

That Your Petitioners can no longer doubt that His Excellency on his return to Auckland has reverted to the views set forth in the former communications of the Colonial Secretary.

That Your Petitioners impute to the influence of secret and irresponsible advisers this apparent return to a discarded opinion.

That assuming (as unfortunately they must do) that the reasoning of the former Despatches is again adhered to, and to be acted upon, Your Petitioners are bound to represent to Your Honourable House, without reserve, the profound indignation roused in this settlement by those communications. The Taranaki Settlers have been long used to official neglect, but they view those Despatches as insulting to the understandings of the persons whom, it is to be supposed, they were expected to satisfy—as evincing at once contempt for the understandings of the Settlers, and utter disregard of their prosperity, and even of their safety. It is fit that Your Honourable House should be at all times duly informed of the popular sentiments. Your Petitioners therefore believe that they have not transgressed the limits of a due respect in thus reporting the universal feeling of the community which they represent.

That Your Petitioners are satisfied that in a case like the present, the interest of the Colony and each of its Provinces is, in a large view, truly identical with the interest of New Plymouth—they are satisfied also of the policy of the course they have urged, and of the essential justice of their demand for protection; in short, they are satisfied that their cause has nothing to dread from any reasons that can bear investigation.

Your Petitioners therefore pray,

That Your Honourable House will be pleased without delay to institute an Inquiry into the present state of the relations of the Native Tribes of Taranaki with each other and with the European Settlers, and as to the means proper to be adopted for restoring the tranquillity of the district, and for ensuring the safety of the European population, and that Your Honourable House will forward all necessary measures for these purposes.

That Your Honourable House will without delay take measures for the abolition of a system under which secret advice is tendered to the Governor of the Colony by irresponsible persons, and will concur with all its powers in the substitution of the system of Government by Officers bound to answer publicly to Your Honourable House and to the Colony at large for the measures taken under their advice.

And Your Petitioners (as in duty bound) will ever pray, &c., &c.

CHARLES BROWN,
Superintendent.

Signed on behalf of the Provincial Council,

J. NEWTON WATT,
Speaker.

New Plymouth, New Zealand,
June 14th, 1855.