

Reporting intention of Natives to occupy Land on the Hutt
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1844/06 Nov 01 (1843) Reporting intention of Natives to occupy Land on the Hutt & respecting their reserves (Chief Police Magistrate, Wellington)

Letter 1844/6 Wellington 1st November 1843

Sir, It having been represented to me that Parties of strange Natives in considerable numbers had arrived in the Valley of the Hutt, taken possession of land there, and were preventing the settlers from extending their cultivations. I lost no time in visiting that District, where it was evident that extensive clearings were in progress by Natives who had lately come to the neighbourhood, but I could not learn that any settler had been hindered in his operations by them, even two who were instanced to me (Mr Boulcott and Mr Mason) were not prevented by these strangers from continuing their clearings, but were refused possession of their land shortly after they went to reside on it, in both cases about two years since.

I have ascertained that these Natives who have recently evinced this determination to occupy so large a proportion of the land on the Hutt, are under the influence of the Chief Rangiaeata, who I understand lays claim to a considerable extent of that Country. The purchasers from the Company are naturally desirous to get possession of the whole of their sections, but they are perfectly aware of the difficulty attending it, and all I spoke to expressed themselves willing to wait patiently for the result of Mr Spains investigations, and begged the Natives might not be coerced on their account, indeed, since my arrival in the District I have remarked the most praiseworthy forbearance on the part of both settlers and Natives, but it is quite evident it cannot long continue, many of the former have now been upwards of four years in the Colony and are still without their land, no energy, no capital can overcome such an unexpected loss of time, their patience and money are both becoming exhausted and unless immediate steps are taken to give them occupation, as well as to remunerate the Natives, in exertion can preserve order, or prevent collisions.

I would therefore beg His Excellency's serious consideration to the remark I offered on this subject in my report of the 12th August, and again most earnestly urge the necessity of the Government adopting measures for the final adjustment of a question of such vital importance both to the peace and prosperity of the Country.

I have the honor to enclose a copy of a letter forwarded to me by the Magistrates at Petre in reply to some complaints made to them by Dr Rees, of petty thefts and annoyances by the Natives in that District, which will prove to His Excellency how general the evil is felt, and what mischief is exacted by the protracted settlement of this business – at Taranaki they likewise experience great inconvenience from it, but at Nelson where they have already suffered so severely from misunderstanding about land it is still more indispensable to remove speedily any cause of excitement or discontent that exists between the two Races.

Connected with this subject it is necessary to bring under His Excellency's notice the "Native Reserves", the use and management of which appears to be imperfectly understood in this District, and I have had considerable difficulty in arranging a difference about one which the Commissioner has recently let to a Settler – from all I can gather these Reserves were originally, in this part of the Country at least, set apart solely for the use of the Aborigines, and having been so explained to them, it is now difficult to make them comprehend how their being occupied by Europeans will be of benefit to them when they neither receive the

payment nor experience any actual advantage arising from the arrangement, they therefore naturally take alarm at finding all the land passing out of their possession and most strenuously oppose it – it becomes then a matter of serious reflection, whether the good that is likely to result by letting these Reserves will compensate the Natives for their loss of land, or the advantage they would divine by being interspersed among the agricultural population, independent of the apparent injustice of the ... and the difficulty there will be in carrying it into effect. I have the honor to be Sir, Your most obedient Honourable Servant, M. Richmond, Chief Police Magistrate.