

this year.) Is in custody of Land Claims Papers. In charge of Gold Mining Leases, which are made out in this office in duplicate.

A Clerk, £160.—Examines Grants relating to Native lands and Native papers connected therewith.

Senior Draughtsman, £250.—Draws plans of land specified on Grants. Makes plans showing position and area of Native lands, and of old claims compiled from documents in the office.

Junior Draughtsman, £145.—Assists the senior.

The business of this office is not strictly divided amongst the officers, but is apportioned amongst them as occasion requires. All Crown Grants for lands sold under Provincial Land Regulations are made out in duplicate, in the Provincial Land Offices—one on parchment being the Grant, and one on paper for record—and are transmitted to this department by the Commissioner of Crown Lands, with a certificate of the Receiver of Land Revenue, showing the locality and area of the lands sold, and the sums paid by the purchaser. This certificate is compared with the Grants, and the Grant with the duplicate, and if found to agree, the Grant is forwarded to the Governor for his signature.

The Seal of the Colony is affixed in this office to Crown Grants; it is kept in the Colonial Secretary's Office, whence it is obtained by the Secretary.

Gold Mining Leases recommended by the Provincial authorities are made out in duplicate in this office.

Grants of Leases, when completed, are forwarded to the Commissioner of Crown Lands for issue, without charge for registration or preparation. We think a charge sufficient to cover the cost of this work should be made.

Grants ordered by the Native Lands Court are made out in this office in duplicate. One copy is sent to the Registrar of Deeds for the Province in which the land granted is situated, for registration and issue to the owners on payment of the fees—another is filed in this office.

If the present system is to continue, we suggest that the checks to prevent the double sale of land, or the double issue of grants, or errors or malversation in dealing with the lands or revenue should be increased. The certificate of the Receiver of Land Revenue should be signed at the end of the list of lots sold—not, as we observed, at the head of the list, which was left open and might have been altered or added to after the certificate had been signed. This document being, with the transmission of the deeds by the Commissioner of Crown Lands (virtually a Provincial officer), authority for the signature of the Governor and the affixing of the Seal of the Colony should be made as exact as possible, and should be countersigned by the officer of the Province responsible for the sale of the land, who should also certify on the Grant as to its accuracy. The relative position and duties of the Commissioners of Crown Lands and the Receivers of Land Revenue (both being technically officers of the General Government) should be defined by regulation so as to fix the responsibility of each in dealing with so serious a matter as the disposal of the Crown Lands and the collection and custody of the Revenue arising therefrom.

We do not, however, think that the present system should be permitted to continue. It is in our opinion unsafe and likely to occasion serious embarrassment.

At present the Secretary for Crown Lands, upon whose recommendation Ministers advise the execution of Crown Grants, has no control over or knowledge of the facts. The survey may have been perfectly made or not, or even not at all; the land may or may not have been sold previously, or reserved; or perhaps should be reserved; or the lot, indefinitely stated in the certified list, may not be the lot described in the Grant; yet the General Government undertakes the whole responsibility of the sale without any means of ascertaining the propriety or safety of so doing.

The sufficiency of the system of survey, or the efficiency of its application is not known to the Government; nor is any system of survey required as a condition upon which the signature of the Governor and Seal of the Colony will be given.

The Commissioner of Crown Lands, although appointed by a Commission of the Governor, is not in reality an Officer of the General Government. His salary is under the control of the Provincial Legislature, and in several Provinces where a Waste Land Commissioner (a Provincial officer) exists, the Governor is compelled by the 4th section of "The Crown Lands Act, 1862," to appoint such officer to be Commissioner of Crown Lands, and the power of removal of that officer is virtually vested by the 5th section in the Superintendent of the Province.

This state of affairs compels the General Government to execute Crown Grants upon the guarantee of an officer whom it only nominally appoints, and over whom it has no control.

The Receiver of Land Revenue, whose certificate of the receipt of the purchase money of the land to be granted is also a necessary preliminary to the execution of the Grant, although absolutely appointed by the Governor, also holds in some cases a Provincial office.

As the correctness of a Crown Grant is a matter of far greater importance than the receipt of the original purchase money, we are of opinion that Commissioners of Crown Lands should be altogether officers of the General Government. They should be appointed by the Governor, independently of any action of a Provincial Government, and their salaries determined by the General Assembly and paid by the General Government.

We notice in the papers laid before the General Assembly in 1865 (C. No. 1, 1865), relative to the appointment of a Receiver of Land Revenue and Commissioner of Crown Lands in the Province of Auckland, that the officer who held both these important offices, received no salary at all for six months in either capacity, the General Government having been under the impression that he would receive as Commissioner of Waste Lands a sufficient salary from the Provincial Government, and the Provincial Council having declined to pass such a vote. The General Government, when it discovered the error, paid that Officer as Receiver of Land Revenue £150 per annum, but no salary was given to him as Commissioner of Crown Lands. This strange anomaly then existed, that an officer who, as Commissioner of Crown Lands and Receiver of Land Revenue, is charged by law with very responsible duties and on whose certificate the General Government was obliged to depend altogether in respect of the receipt of the purchase money, and the correctness of Crown Grants which it was called upon to execute, performed his duties during six months without any salary at all, and afterwards for twelve months