

FIRST ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

IMMIGRATION AND PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT.

Immigration and Public Works Department,

Wellington, 3rd August, 1871.

SIR,—

I have the honor to submit to your Excellency my Report on the Immigration and Public Works Department.

His Excellency Sir George Ferguson Bowen, G.C.M.G.,
Governor of New Zealand.

I have, &c.,
W. GISBORNE.

REPORT.

THE object which the Government have had in view since the end of last Session has been to give practical effect to "The Immigration and Public Works Act, 1870," and "The Railways Act, 1870," or, in other words, to launch the comprehensive system of colonization contained in those Acts with prudence, with economy, with justice to various interests, and with reasonable prospect of future success. The Report of Mr. J. Blackett, Acting Chief Engineer, and the other papers to be presented to Parliament, will convey full and detailed information on the subject, and I will only venture here to touch lightly on its salient points. In doing so I will take separately the respective heads—Organization of Department, Land Purchase in North Island, Road Works in North Island, Railways, Roads in Westland, Electric Telegraph Extension, Water Races on Gold Fields, and Immigration.

Organization of Department.

About the end of September last, I was appointed *ad interim* Minister of Public Works. The Department had to be created, and the Government have been desirous of forming it on the principle of careful selection of officers and gradual adaptation to the work to be performed. The first officer to be appointed, on whom the chief responsibility would rest, was the professional head of the Department, and the Government have been fortunate in obtaining the services of Mr. John Blackett, C.E., as Engineer and Acting Chief Engineer. The office of Chief Engineer has been and will be kept vacant until it shall have been determined whether it should be filled up by some one selected in Europe experienced in the construction of modern railways. The Colony has reason to be much indebted to Mr. Blackett for the energy, prudence, and ability which he has displayed. His labours have been very arduous, extending as they did over both Islands; and he has been as indefatigable in setting on foot and forwarding the various public works as he has been watchful over their cost and execution. District Engineers, subordinate to the Acting Chief Engineer, have also been appointed in Manawatu, Canterbury, Otago, and Westland, to superintend the works in progress. Mr. Knowles has been appointed Under Secretary, and his official experience, industry, and general ability specially qualify him for that office.

Land Purchase in North Island.

Part IV. of the Immigration and Public Works Act authorises the Governor, at the request of the Superintendent of a Province in the North Island, to acquire land in that Province for the purposes of settlement, the cost of purchase being chargeable to such Province.

In the Province of Auckland this provision has been taken advantage of to a slight extent, but in the Provinces of Hawke's Bay and Wellington a large purchase has been effected. Negotiations had for many years been in progress for the purchase of a large tract of Native land, called the Seventy-mile Bush; and at last the exertions of Mr. Ormond, the Government Agent in Hawke's Bay, have led to an agreement being signed, by which the Native owners covenant to cede 231,430 acres of fertile land for about £16,000. There still remains a large block at the Wairarapa end to be purchased; but the co-operation of the Superintendents of Wellington and Hawke's Bay justifies a strong hope that the whole block will soon be acquired. The acquisition of this fine territory, and its occupation by immigrants, will give an incalculable impetus to the colonization of the North Island.

Road Works in North Island.

The Legislature, with a wise liberality, appropriated £400,000, at the rate of £100,000 a year, for main roads in the North Island. They felt that works of that kind, prudently devised and effectively executed, would, by opening up the interior and uniting it by easy communication with European settlements on the coast, be most calculated to secure the permanent tranquillity of the North Island, and the most rapid colonization of the whole Colony. On special grounds of public policy, arising out