

There is a great deal of settlement yet to be done in the country, which can be greatly promoted by keeping the public well informed of what lands are open for selection, and by disseminating information as to their accessibility, nature of soil, possible products, and so forth; but what is most essential to the spread of settlement is the steady, systematic opening-up of Crown lands by formation of tracks and roads on carefully-graded lines, the survey of suitable areas along these lines for selection, and the publication of maps of the same before sale. In this way the acquisition of land is brought within the comprehension of the man least acquainted with business in the country; for he can, with the photo-lithograph in his hand, visit the block before the day of application, walk over it, and decide what section will suit him. He has no need to employ any one to do this for him. He comes in direct communication with the Land Department, and he is not weighted with the expense of land agents or special-settlement associations or other agencies.

The department has now got such a start on this system that, if maintained, it can be beforehand with the public, and keep up a supply of suitable blocks ready for selection.

In Wellington, Nelson, and Canterbury, the arrears of surveys can be worked off this year, so that the department will then have discharged its obligations to the land-purchasers, some of whom have been waiting years for their boundaries. The areas which have been surveyed or yet await survey will be detailed in the Annual Survey Report now in course of preparation.

J. MCKERROW.

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MEMORANDUM from the Hon. Mr. ROLLESTON to the SECRETARY for CROWN LANDS.

HAVING regard to the large amount of land which has recently been divested of the Native title and become Crown land in the North Island, it is very desirable that steps should be taken to set apart blocks of the best land in every district for the purposes of settlement under the deferred-payment and village-settlement sections of the Land Act. For these purposes blocks of from 5,000 to 10,000 acres should be selected at convenient intervals according to the general features of the country, being suitable for agriculture, and having reasonable facilities for obtaining wood or coal and water; they should also be selected in proximity to the main lines of communication by road, railroad, or water. My own observations lead me to the conclusion that there is a great probability of land suitable especially for small settlers being put up for sale on immediate payment, and being absorbed by speculators; and it is therefore very desirable to put aside and maintain inalienably for this purpose a sufficient proportion of land to secure the power of obtaining land to small settlers in each district. Probably the best plan would be to obtain a joint report from the Commissioner of Crown Lands and the Chief Surveyor in each district, recommending the lands to be so set aside; and from time to time, as fresh lands are acquired or opened up, additional recommendations should be made before the lands are dealt with by the Waste Lands Boards. While the best land suitable for general cultivation should be chosen, it should be so taken as not to absorb the frontages to second-class lands, which will be sold in larger blocks on pastoral deferred payments or otherwise. If care is not taken in this respect, the value of the second-class lands will be seriously deteriorated for purposes of settlement.

It is very desirable that some blocks of land should be reserved in the North Island, especially to the north of Auckland, for the purpose of establishing special settlements for vine or olive cultivation. In your recent visit to the North you will, no doubt, have borne this in mind, and will be able to make suggestions.

In the Middle Island a good deal has already been done in the Province of Otago in determining blocks of land for deferred payment. It would not be difficult now to complete the selection of lands suitable for this purpose and for village settlement in the central district. This would be the first step towards the classification of the land generally which must take place shortly, before the expiration of the pastoral leases. A map showing these blocks and indicating them by colour would be a useful addition to the "Lands Guide."

30th April, 1880.

W. ROLLESTON.

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