

investigation of title, and are increasing very much on account of the facilities afforded the Natives in "The Native Land Court Act, 1880." Under section 40 any two or more Natives are entitled to apply for survey to the Governor. On the application being forwarded to the department through the office of the Chief Judge of Native Land Court, the survey usually proceeds at the expense of Government. After completion of survey and investigation of title, a lien for cost of survey is filed in the office of the Chief Judge at Auckland. Up to recent date these liens amount to a total of £14,617, of which £2,215 has been repaid by Natives on their dealing with the land.

There are 120 applications now on hand, comprising a total area of about 600,000 acres, and they keep coming in. The cost of survey has become a very heavy drain on the ordinary survey appropriation. This, of course, is a minor consideration as against the importance of inducing the Natives to aid in the settlement of the country, by bringing their land under title, thereby rendering it negotiable either by sale or lease. The outlay for survey will in time be recovered either in money or land. In cases where the area in allowance for survey would be sufficient for sale, it might be worth while, where there are no sufficient reasons to the contrary, to mark off the Government portion and offer it for settlement.

ROAD SURVEYS.

In the exercise of the right reserved in old Crown grants and in titles under the Native Land Acts, the department in the twelve months ended the 30th June last selected, surveyed, and recorded a total of 440 miles of road-lines. In this class of work the department has got a legacy of immense trouble and expense. Many of the former surveys were simply rectangles placed on the face of a rugged bush country, with no attempt at finding practicable road-lines to give access to them; the road question being disposed of by the simple expedient of reserving 5 per cent. of the area of each section, as an allowance for road-lines, to be selected at some future time. The Legislature, by subsequently limiting the time of selection to a period of five years from the issue of the grant for Crown lands, and to fifteen years from date of memorial of ownership or title under the Native Land Act, has aggravated the difficulty of dealing with this question, by implying the necessity of undertaking road surveys through lands which, since they were not done when the land was originally surveyed, could be very well left undone for some time longer without detriment to public or private interests. As but a small margin of the five or fifteen years is left in many cases, the department cannot hope to undertake all the work remaining to be done within the time available. Attention will therefore, in preference, be given to the survey of those lines which are deemed the most important.

ROAD CONSTRUCTION.

As the pioneer of settlement the department, in ordinary course, lines out the future roads of the country, and, under the regulations now in force, lays off a road to every section, howsoever small or remote the area may be. Where necessary the road-lines are graded. By circular 59 the limit of grade for main road-lines is fixed at 1 in 15, and for occupation-lines 1 in 10. Where, from the nature of the country, these grades are not attainable except by long detours, the surveyor reports for advice. Every care is taken to lay off the best lines, and there is no danger of the absurdities of the rectangular system being repeated over hilly country to the great trouble and vexation of settlers.

Under the vote, "Improvement of Crown Lands before Sale," the department is charged with the duty of the clearing and formation of road-lines and of drainage works sufficient to open out the lands for the occupation of settlers. In these works the valuable co-operation and assistance of the officers of the Public Works Department is acknowledged, as also of several County Councils and Road Boards; but where these agencies are not available, as in the more remote districts especially, the department undertakes this work entirely. Within the last two years 530 miles of road have been opened out, and 24 miles of outfall drains cut, at a total cost of £83,886 18s. 7d., up to the 30th June last. Reports on