

1907.
NEW ZEALAND.

NATIVE LANDS IN THE ROHE-POTAE (KING-COUNTRY) DISTRICT

(AN INTERIM REPORT).

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

Wellington, 4th July, 1907.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

We have the honour to present an interim report on Native lands in the Rohe-Potae district, commonly known as the King-country. The plan accompanying this report sufficiently defines the extent of the district.

More than any other district wherein the Maoris own large areas of land this has attracted the attention of the public, particularly of the Auckland Province, who have used every possible means of emphasizing the defects and anomalies of our Maori-land laws as exemplified in the position of the unsettled lands of the King-country. The construction of the Main Trunk Railway, the extensive purchases of Native lands and the rapid settlement thereon of European farmers, followed by the creation of local bodies with powers necessitating direct contact with Maoris and Maori-owned areas at every turn, have thrown into strong relief the shortcomings of the old *régime*, wherein rates and taxes were unknown, weeds were not obnoxious, and the hustle of the modern money-making agriculturist and pastoralist not dreamt of. So high did feeling run that criticism overstepped the limits of fairness, and fastened upon the Maori owner, we think without sufficient justification, the responsibility of blocking settlement. We feel it our duty to discharge the Maori owners from most, if not all, of the responsibility for the tardy settlement of these lands. Those who have railed at the curse of Maori ownership should pause