

1908.
NEW ZEALAND.

EAST COAST NATIVE TRUST LANDS

(REPORT, BALANCE-SHEET, AND STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS IN RESPECT OF).

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly in pursuance of Section 13 of "The East Coast Native Trust Lands Act, 1902."

EAST COAST NATIVE TRUST LANDS.

REPORT BY THE EAST COAST COMMISSIONER.

SIR,—

Gisborne, N.Z., 11th September, 1908.

I have the honour to submit the following report of the transactions of the Trust, together with the balance-sheet and statement of receipts and expenditure to the 31st March last, and particulars of lands owned and leased at that date.

Purchase-moneys.—During the past year the balances outstanding on purchases on the Trust lands sold have all been received, with the exception of one amount of £196 12s.

Mortgages.—A further sum of £5,000 has been paid off the mortgages raised by the Board, and the total amount now owing by the Trust on mortgage has been reduced to £21,000.

Rents.—The rents received during the year amount to £5,115 10s. 3d., of which a considerable portion has been applied in payment of the liabilities of the blocks from which the rents were derived, and £540 10s. has been paid over to the beneficiaries. The position of most of the rent-producing blocks is so greatly improved that it is now practicable to pay over to the beneficiaries a very much larger portion of the rents than heretofore.

Farms.—Acting under the provisions of the amending Act of last session, I have cleared practically the whole of the bush and scrub on Paremata No. 3, and have begun to farm the block. The farming operations for the period under review, which were necessarily of limited extent, resulted in a profit of £196 17s. 6d. The block, which is situated close to Tolaga Bay, consists of rolling hills with a large proportion of alluvial flat. The clearing, fencing, and other improvements have almost entirely been done by Natives. In the Tahora Block I have begun to fall bush on five farms. I expect to have about 2,000 acres in all cleared in Tahora by November next. The largest farm in the block will be at Papuni, at the junction of the Ruakituri River and the Makokomuka Stream. The contracts let for this year for bushfelling on Papuni are for 900 acres. The four other Tahora farms are situated about the centre of the block, on or near the Stock Track. On these rather more than 1,000 acres are being cleared. Here also the bushfelling and other improvements are, as far as possible, being effected by the Native owners.

Since the 31st March last two other blocks—viz., Maraetaha No. 1d (commonly known as Te Kopua), 2,303 acres, and Whaitiri No. 2, 412 acres 2 roods 33 perches, have been vested in me at the request of the beneficiaries. A portion of the Kopua had been cleared by the Native Committee and was being farmed by them when I took over the block. I have increased the number of the live-stock on the farm, and am now clearing a further area of 700 acres of bush.

In other blocks, and especially in Mangapoike No. 2b, 3,024 acres, the beneficiaries have asked me to undertake the farming of their lands, but for financial reasons I have not, up to the present, seen my way to comply with their wishes. I however intend to clear and farm a portion of Mangapoike No. 2b during next year. Part of the block has already been cleared and farmed by some of the beneficiaries, who, however, in common with nearly all other Natives, labour under the disability of being unable to arrange satisfactory finance.

During the past year I visited a number of the blocks, and inspected the leaseholds on them. In each instance I found that the improvements effected were considerably in excess of what was required under the conditions of the leases.

I have, &c.,

T. A. COLEMAN,

East Coast Commissioner.

The Hon. the Minister for Native Affairs, Wellington.