

## POUKAWA NATIVE RESERVE.

The drainage of the lake and swamp on this reserve should be gone on with either by the Government or the Public Trustee. The estimated cost of draining is £6,000; increased value of land after reclaiming, £28,000.

It will require fresh legislation before the work is undertaken. I feel certain the alarm felt by the riparian owners as to possible damage to their lands from the contemplated works is not justified. Little or no injury will be done them, and a time should be fixed when claims for prospective damage should be lodged. The amount, if any, to be paid could be then fixed by some specially constituted tribunal, and the whole cost of the works, including such compensation, would be ascertained before starting.

## GREYMOUTH NATIVE RESERVE.

An agitation against the office has been started by some of the lessees of the Greymouth Native Reserve. This is supported with more vigour than discretion by the local Press. "It is because of this growing feeling that we believe the time is ripe for the Greymouth Native lessees to press for a deliverance from the tyranny of the office of Public Trustee." "It (the Public Trust Office) is no longer the unassuming, popular, and efficient office that it was in its younger days: it has waxed fat and begins to kick." "It has escaped the wholesome influence of public opinion that is more or less felt—and to their great benefit—by most other Departments in our Civil Service." "Judging by the attitude that has been taken up regarding the Native reserves by the Public Trust Office of late, the only proper course would seem to be to get the whole question removed out of its hands with all the celerity that is possible." "They (the tenants) have learned that there are other landlords as graspingly unfair as the traditional 'Irish landlord,' who has earned a character for the most sordid extortion." These are some of the statements printed with a view to working up feeling in the matter, and a strong committee has been elected to alter the present system.

The reserve (in area 500 acres) is nearly all occupied for business or residential purposes. A few facts will prove that the lessees are not being oppressed. The Government valuation of the portions leased is £95,371. The gross rentals are £3,509. This is less than £3 15s. per cent. The actual value of the reserve is, however, considerably more than the Government value: the Mayor of Greymouth, speaking at a public meeting on the 23rd July last, stated, "For some years the Borough Council had declined to go in for revaluation, though that was legally necessary every three years. The reason for this was that, if the values went up, extra rates would have to be paid, besides which the Native owners would speedily take advantage of it to increase their rental."

Some figures relating to various leases will show that the Native owners in many cases are not getting what is due to them:—

Section.	Block.				Rent paid.	Rent at 5 per cent. on Government Value, 1904-5 (unimproved).		
						£	s.	d.
52 and part 53	2*	..	..	..	..	11	12	0
Part 100	12*	..	..	..	..	8	0	0
" 62	10	..	..	..	..	6	0	0
" 100	12	..	..	..	..	12	10	0
" 130	12	..	..	..	..	20	1	0
" 131	12	..	..	..	..	8	10	0
291c	17	..	..	..	..	13	7	6
7	5	..	..	..	..	23	6	0
292E, 293A	27	..	..	..	..	7	10	0
Part 137A	24	..	..	..	..	8	0	0
" 139B	25	..	..	..	..	5	0	0
" 150	38	..	..	..	..	61	8	0
2A, 2B	4	..	..	..	..	82	13	0
1 and 3	5	..	..	..	..	5	0	0
202I, 202J	31	..	..	..	..	5	0	0
86	4	..	..	..	..	9	15	0
Part 163A	37	..	..	..	..	15	10	0
216, 217	34	..	..	..	..			

\* In these cases the lessees are the proprietors of the two local newspapers. The lessees of the other sections are members of the committee.

Other facts may be mentioned. One of the committee was the lessee of Section 317, Block IX, containing 1 rood 1 perch; rent, £15 per annum; date of lease, 1st July, 1901. He sold his interest in 1908 for £2,000. The purchasers immediately removed the old buildings on the leasehold and rebuilt. The amount paid was therefore for his interest in the leasehold only.

Other cases are: (a.) Rent paid, £1 10s. per annum; the lessee sold for £40; his successor sold for £256. (b.) Rent paid, £3; the lessee subdivided, and sold for £355. The purchasers in these two cases, in addition to paying for the right to occupy, pay a portion of the ground-rent, small as it is.

While objecting strenuously to the Native owners getting the unearned increment, some of their lessees are doing nicely out of it.

Theoretically the principle of dealing with this reserve is as perfect as human ingenuity can make it. No Fair Rent Act could better it. The tenants are owners of all the improvements; the leases being perpetually renewable, with an adjustment of ground-rent only every twenty-one years. In the fixing of this rent the lessee has an equal voice with the representative of the owners. Failing