

SURVEYS.

In my former reports I have repeatedly drawn attention to the fact that the survey and roading of Native lands are the crux of the whole position. For years past the Native Land Courts have had to subdivide Native lands to enable the Native owners to obtain individual titles. In making these subdivisions cases have occurred where the land has been further subdivided upon the original sketch-map of the block before completion of the original survey; then when an owner applies to have his interest surveyed, so as to obtain a Land Transfer title, the block is surveyed as a whole and then the subdivisational partition surveys are made, and it is found that in a number of cases a shortage of area occurs, with the result that a *pro rata* deduction has to be made throughout, causing delay to the purchaser or lessee in receiving his title. Then when the survey is completed it is found that quite a number of the sections have no means of access, which leads to further complications.

Under the 1909 Act, however, provision was made to obviate this (see section 117 of the Native Land Act, 1909, and Rule 29). Under this rule the Registrar is enjoined to forward all applications for partition or subdivision to the Chief Surveyor of the land district wherein the land the subject of the application is situated, so as to allow the Chief Surveyor to report where and what road-lines are required to be laid off on the land for settlement generally, and the estimated cost of surveying such road-lines.

Theoretically this procedure looks simple enough, but it has been found in actual practice that it is a somewhat arduous and complicated procedure, owing to the Chief Surveyor, when not having sufficient information at hand from a local officer, requiring a survey in connection with roading by a special officer before he will furnish a report. This procedure, at application stage, is inadvisable on account of the expense, unless steps are taken for the Native owners to deposit the cost, or a fair proportion, of the survey prior to the work proceeding, as in the event of road-lines not suiting the partition scheme in the mind of the Native owners, they would probably decline to proceed.

The difference between the Department's and the Native owners' view is that the Department holds that the partition scheme should be attempted to be carried out on the general configuration of the country, whereas the Native owners desire a partition according to family "takes" and occupation rights. This is a difficult problem to overcome, although no doubt the subdivision for individualization of the owners' interests would be, for settlement and beneficial working purposes, far more advantageous to them. The obtaining of Land Transfer titles should be the aim of an owner of Native freehold land. Once he obtained this title, the troubles and vexatious delays, &c., would practically be things of the past.

With regard to lands administered by the various Maori Land Boards, there again the delay in placing the lands on the market for public competition is on account of the scarcity of surveyors. In commenting on surveys I wish it to be clearly understood that I am not in any way deprecating the Survey Department, or trying to belittle their efforts on our behalf. The whole trouble, so it is stated, is an insufficiency of surveyors to carry out the work.

Another fact which has to be borne in mind is that, although there may be a large block of Native land suitable for settlement, it may be owned by a large number of Natives, either by a tribe or hapu, and the individual interests are so small in the majority of cases that it would cost more than the land was worth to survey each individual interest to enable the issue of titles in severalty.

However, I think, as far as vested lands in the Maori Land Board districts are concerned, the Board should take full control of these subdivisational surveys and roading for settlement purposes. In the past this procedure has always worked satisfactorily by the Board and the surveyors making direct agreements and under contract system, which is mostly based on schedule rates.

Whilst remarking on vested lands I might point out that any one coming within the category of "land-seekers" can obtain information as to lands open for selection on application at the respective offices of the Maori Land Boards.

On the 31st March last there were open for application some thirty-five subdivisions under leasing, disposal of freehold tenure, and timber-cutting rights.

MAORI COUNCILS.

I have to draw attention to my previous remarks in the reports of the two previous years hereon.

NATIVE INTERPRETERS.

During the period twenty-four persons sat for examination, with the following result: Twenty passed first-grade and four passed second-grade examinations, licenses for which were issued accordingly. The total amount of fees earned under this head is £87 12s.

During the year one first-grade and one second-grade interpreter's license was revoked owing to irregularities.

GENERAL SUMMARY.

Those who will take the trouble to study the previous reports together with this will naturally come to the conclusion that, proceeding on the lines of the past three years, it will be only a question of a few more years when the Maoris (who some seventy years ago owned all the land) will, as the result of the activity displayed by alienations effected during the past three years, for which period an average of 500,000 acres per annum have been alienated, be left with a limited area for occupation.