

1915.
NEW ZEALAND.

DEPARTMENT OF LANDS AND SURVEY:
KAURI-GUM INDUSTRY.

REPORT FOR YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH, 1915; TOGETHER WITH STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly pursuant to Section 5 of the Kauri-gum Industry Amendment Act, 1914.

SIR,—

Department of Lands and Survey, Wellington, 1st June, 1915.

As this is the first report presented to Parliament since the passing of the above Act, it may be well to briefly narrate the circumstances leading up to its passing prior to reporting on the operations undertaken. The Kauri-gum Industry Act, 1898, authorized the setting apart of areas of gum-bearing Crown lands, which were not to be available for settlement, but only for kauri-gum digging. From the passing of the Act up to 1914 a total area of 276,210 acres had been set apart as kauri-gum reserves, and an area of 48,849 acres withdrawn from the operations of the Act, in addition to the area affected by the Kaitaia Land Drainage Act, 1913. As it was thought that portions of the reserves could now be withdrawn from reservation owing to their being worked out through gum-digging operations, a Royal Commission was appointed in March, 1914, consisting of Messrs. R. P. Greville, F.R.G.S. (Lands and Survey Department), as Chairman; Samuel Stafford, of Waipu; William Stewart, of Kawakawa; Robert Hebden, of Waihopo; and J. M. McKay, of Waipu. The Commission inspected the areas set apart and submitted a comprehensive and valuable report on the subject, which report was duly laid before Parliament as paper C.—12 of 1914. The Commission recommended that the reservation be cancelled over 71,164 acres of kauri-gum reserves, that the State should break in and develop the gum lands before disposal, that the checking of sand-drift on certain areas and the afforestation of other areas should be dealt with, that a Department be set up to take charge of the gum lands and the kauri-gum industry generally, and considered that the development of the Crown gum lands under judicious management offered a practicable solution of the “unemployed” difficulty for many years to come.

To give effect to these recommendations the Kauri-gum Industry Act was amended, and gave the Minister of Lands general powers to work kauri-gum lands belonging to the Crown, and to purchase kauri-gum from diggers and sell it to the best advantage. Officers were to be appointed and money raised for the purpose of the Act. In accordance therewith operations under the Act were undertaken by the Lands and Survey Department, and Mr. R. P. Greville was appointed Kauri-gum Superintendent.

The appended report by the Superintendent contains an interesting and graphic account of work under his control, which bears evidence of a thorough grasp of the position, and shows that the action taken by the Government has been beneficial to the industry, and afforded much-needed relief.

I made a personal inspection recently of what was being done, visiting the workings in the far north of the Dominion in company with the Superintendent, and I have much pleasure in testifying to the latter's energy and thoroughness. I regret that this will be the last report that I will have the opportunity of presenting, as I will shortly be retiring from the Service, but I wish my appreciation of the great energy displayed from first to last by Mr. Greville to be placed on record.

I have, &c.,

JAMES MACKENZIE,

Under-Secretary for Lands.

The Right Hon. W. F. Massey, P.C., Minister of Lands.