

SESSION II.
1923.
NEW ZEALAND.

UREWERA LANDS.

REPORT BY COMMISSIONERS UNDER THE UREWERA LANDS ACT, 1921-22.

Laid on the Table of the House of Representatives by Leave.

Wellington, 6th August, 1923.

To the Hon. D. H. Guthrie, Minister of Lands, and the Hon. J. G. Coates, Native Minister,
Wellington.

Re Urewera Lands Consolidation Scheme.

DEAR SIRS,—

We have the honour to report that, notwithstanding the delays incidental to a scheme of this magnitude, satisfactory progress has been made in giving effect to the provisions of the Urewera Lands Act, 1921-22.

The work of the Commission has been retarded owing to the Natives postponing meetings from time to time, disputes as to boundaries, and rival claims to various portions of the land, necessitating visits to the places, and in some cases topographical surveys, to guide us in giving decisions, and generally in explaining the object of the consolidation to the Natives. In many cases our work amounted to investigations of title, in which we were heavily handicapped for the want of reliable surveys.

We believe that the major portion of the work already completed has met with the entire satisfaction of the Natives.

In the Waimana Valley thirty-one Native sections have been laid off and surveyed. The plans are now being examined, and the orders will shortly be completed.

At Raroa eight Native sections have been laid off, surveyed plans examined, and the orders are now being prepared.

At Ruatoki fifty-one Native locations have been fixed, and most of them surveyed. In some instances topographical surveys were necessary before final orders could be made and boundaries fixed. These surveys have been completed, and plans are now being prepared, and as soon as these are finished we shall hold another meeting at Ruatoki to complete our work.

At Waiohāu nine Native awards were located, and are now being surveyed.

At Te Whaiti twenty-two awards have been made. Their survey is well advanced, and will be completed this spring.

At Maungapohatu six subdivisions have been laid off, and arrangements made for their survey to be proceeded with this spring.

At Ruatahuna sixteen subdivisional orders have been drawn up, and topographical plans have been prepared to enable the remainder of the claims in this district to be dealt with as soon as the petitions of Tikareti te Iriwhiro (No. 341/1922), Pineere Hori and others, to Parliament have been disposed of. At present Pineere and others associated with him refuse to submit their claims for our consideration. We have found that in the Ruatahuna district the sitting of the Commission placed a heavy burden on the resident owners in supplying food and accommodation for the visiting tribes interested. The sitting at Ruatahuna stands adjourned, and we suggest that when we resume there we should be empowered to make a small contribution towards the expenses of the *marae*.

At Ohauterangi twelve Native awards were made, and their survey will be proceeded with this spring.

At Tarapounamu twelve subdivisional orders have been made, and their boundaries laid down on topographical maps we have had prepared, but this survey cannot be completed until the Ruatahuna work is finished.

Fourteen reserves around Lake Waikaremoana have been located, and boundaries fixed on the ground. Surveys are all that is now required to complete these holdings. The list of those owners in the Waikaremoana Block who take their shares in debentures, as provided by the Act, cannot be completed until all the groups are finally located, as transfers are continually being effected and shares taken elsewhere in land.

Arrangements have been made whereby all of Residue 4 Group take Crown land at Hercheretau (Wairoa) in lieu of debentures.

In addition to the above we have defined large areas of the Crown award, thus enabling the Lands Department to proceed with their settlement surveys. During the progress of the work we have found it necessary to make 658 transfers as between the various groups, and appoint 759 successors to deceased persons, to keep the lists of owners up to date, and have also purchased for the Crown interests from forty owners.

The Natives have asked us to recommend the setting-aside out of the Crown award three *pua manu*, or forest reserves, in the vicinity of (1) The Kohuru-Tukuroa Block (approximately 800 acres); (2) Te Werciti, in Tarapounamu Block (area unknown); (3) Pukeaho, in Tarapounamu Block (about 400 acres). This request is submitted for your consideration.

In addition they ask that about 500 acres of Maungapohatu Mountain and about 200 acres of the peaks of the Huiarau Range be permanently reserved—both localities being regarded by them as sacred places, recorded in their legends and associated with their ancestors, many of whom are buried there. Both places are within the Crown's award, and appear to be quite useless for any practical purpose, and the Crown in the ordinary course of events will probably reserve, for climatic or other reasons, the entire area of both the mountain and the range. The question arises whether such reservation would not be sufficient to satisfy the Natives' request without putting the Crown to the heavy unrecoverable expense of surveying off the special portions asked for.

The Natives are fulfilling their obligations without demur in respect to their roading contribution of £20,000, awards in land having been made to the Crown for the proportion due from each section dealt with; and in this connection we beg to call your attention to representations that have been made to us to the effect that it will be a great hardship if the liability for rates is enforced within twelve months of the completion of the titles, many of which will shortly be ready for countersigning by the Chief Judge. Considering the poorness of the land and the fact that the Natives have but scanty means to improve and work it, we have no hesitation in recommending for your favourable consideration that section 16 of the Urewera Lands Act, 1921-22, be amended by substituting five years in lieu of the twelve months therein mentioned, so as to give the Native owners a further inducement to bring their lands into profitable use, and thus enable them to be able to meet their rating obligations.

We beg to suggest an amendment of section 9 of the Act to enable the Commission to clothe with titles any Crown or national-endowment land awarded to Natives in lieu of Urewera interests, such power not to be exercised without the precedent consent of the Commissioner of Crown Lands for the district.

It has been found necessary to connect some of the roads laid off by the Commission for subdivisional purposes with roads outside the boundaries of the Urewera country by connecting roads running through intervening Native lands, and we therefore suggest that power be given the Commission to lay off such connecting roads in the manner provided by section 50 of the Native Land Amendment Act, 1913.

In conclusion, we beg to point out that the work of the Commission has been intermittent to meet the convenience of the Natives, the actual working-time being less than six months.

We have, &c.,

R. J. KNIGHT, } Urewera Commissioners.
H. CARR, }

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