

SURVEYS UNDER THE NATIVE LANDS ACT.

5 A.—No. 10B.

The cost of this for one year, including the office establishment, as shown in the accompanying schedule, will amount to £5000.

SCHEDULE.

<i>Office Staff:—</i>							
Inspector performing other duties	...	...	...	...	£500	0	0
Chief Draftsman	...	...	...	...	250	0	0
Assistant ditto	...	...	...	...	200	0	0
Stationery, instruments, &c.	...	...	...	...	100	0	0
						£1,050	0 0
<i>Trigonometrical Staff:—</i> Two parties, each consisting of							
One Surveyor at	£8	0	0	per week			
Two Assistant ditto	8	0	0	"			
Nine Natives	13	10	0	"			
Contingencies	5	10	0	"			
				£35	0	0 = for a year	£3,500 0 0
Instruments ordered	...	...	...	...	£200	0	0
Repairs made in the Colony	...	...	...	...	100	0	0
Contingencies	...	...	...	...	200	0	0
						£4,000	0 0
						£5,050	0 0

It would be presumptuous in me to enter at all into the question of how the burden of this considerable outlay should be borne, but I may be permitted to observe that whether this work is looked upon as an effort to set the Geography and Topography of the whole country on a sound basis, or whether it is considered specially as a means of forwarding the operation of the Native Lands Court, it is one of a truly National character. In the former point of view it will ultimately effect the value of every estate in the country, and lay the foundation for great future facilities in defining properties, planning public works, forming districts for political and municipal purposes, and for carrying out the far-seeing operations with a view to the future, which characterize the Government of a civilized people.

In the latter point of view it will materially assist in carrying out an operation by which the tenure of two-thirds of the country will be altered, a policy which, if as successful as it promises to be, may peaceably solve questions which have resisted the utmost exertions of the Colony, and which it would be pitiable to embarrass or endanger by any undue pressure on the Native Land Claimants.

The Native land owner is already placed at a very great disadvantage in getting his land surveyed: rarely possessing ready money, he is obliged to find some one to survey his land on credit, and so often pays double what it cost a European; and now that from causes which the Natives cannot appreciate, the value of land has sunk to the lowest point, there is a danger if the burthens upon them are materially increased, of a feeling of discouragement arising which may bring the system now so popular into a discredit from which it may never recover.

At the very short notice I have had for the preparation of the present Report, I am unable to suggest any plan on which the cost of inspection of surveys or of triangulation, or of that proportion of it which is in justice chargeable to the present land claimants, can be recovered by a system of fees, nor is it within my province to do so; but it is impossible to look at the subject without seeing how very unequal the costs of surveying Native lands are, and how very differently they will be effected by a triangulation, if carried out. To connect small blocks of forest land in the North, in Kaipara for instance, with a trigonometrical station, will often be difficult and costly, and it will be looked on by the surveyor, and therefore by the Natives, as merely so much additional labour thrown on them; but in the open plains of the interior, the completion of the trigonometrical surveys would render private survey unnecessary, except in the case of a boundary line or two.

Still all discretionary charges are obviously objectionable, and in the present unsettled condition of the value of land, I can see no mode of fixing a charge which might not be far too light in some cases and yet such as to be prohibitive in others; possibly just those it might be desirable to encourage, namely, lands intended to be held by individual Native owners, or to be leased at low rentals as runs.

I have, &c.,
THEOPH. HEALE.

The Honorable the Native Minister, Wellington.