

In addition to this reduction made in the acreage of the confiscated land, the Compensation Court awarded to Hata Rio and other Natives 8,000 acres near the Waitotara River on conditions, as to which I reported in a memorandum for the information of the Hon. the Premier, dated the 31st May, 1870.

Besides this, there are the large reserves of Wareroa, 10,500 acres; Mokoia, 6,000 acres; and Taumaha, 2,800 acres to the north-west of the Patea River; and thirteen small ones, varying in area from 50 to 400 acres, which are all whose boundaries can be ascertained, and whose position is approximately marked on the appended tracing, which was forwarded to me by Mr. Parris, at my request, and which he describes as "a rough sketched plan of the reserves, showing the locality of each as marked off when the district was surveyed."

For convenience of reference, I have tabulated the whole of these reserves under appropriate headings, but I must remark that various other claims, which do not appear upon the face of any official record, are made by loyal and other Natives. These I have indicated by colouring certain portions of the sketch map of the district green. They are vague in their character, but cannot be neglected without danger in the present state of the country. Their existence renders it impossible to deal with any of the confiscated land with safety, till some arrangement has been made by the Government and the Natives, by which the rights of each will be strictly defined. Were this done, the open land available for settlement to the south-east of the Waingongoro River would amount to about 30,000 acres, the greater part of which would readily sell for £2 per acre if put up to auction under the Confiscated Land Regulations of April 13th, 1870. This estimate does not include the Native reserves before mentioned, or the railway reserves, which is said to contain 12,000 acres, and for the occupation of which special provision is made in the Regulations. The land to the north-west of the Waingongoro River ought not to be occupied at present, except as a military settlement, for reasons which are sufficiently obvious. The same reasons apply to some extent to the bush lands which skirt the open land, and in which I understand there are many clearings that may be occupied were there no danger to be apprehended from the Natives. As it is, to occupy such country would be to tempt them to make war upon its inhabitants, whom it would be impossible to protect. At present, though it might be useful to find out, by a kind of prospecting survey, what is its nature, I think no attempt should be made to occupy the bush country. What I recommend is, that after a general trigonometrical survey of the whole of the open country has been made, and after all the Native claims have been disposed of, that this should be regularly surveyed in a series of blocks of about ten miles in length, beginning with that next to the Waitotara River, so taken as to include all the open land and some of the forest, and then, by selling each block in succession under the Regulations, the land would fetch its full market value, and would be settled in the manner which would best conduce to the safety of its inhabitants. I need scarcely point out that the land I have referred to is, owing to its excellent quality, admirably adapted to the requirements of small capitalists who intend to work their own farms. Many of these are already settled in the district, and I have received numerous applications for blocks of land from persons who want to cultivate small farms of 200 or 300 acres.

During my recent visit to the West Coast, I found that there was a general feeling in favour of leasing land from the Government, with a purchasing clause. I am strongly of opinion that, within certain defined areas, such a system might be adopted with advantage. While it is of such importance, as a question of security, that the country should be occupied by a considerable population as speedily as possible, extra inducements might be held out to men of small means to become settlers. It has, I know, been argued that if the district is safe, people will gladly purchase land and occupy it, and that if it is not safe it is wrong to tempt them into it. The answer to this is, that the district which may be unsafe if sparsely inhabited, is made safe when its inhabitants are sufficiently numerous to protect themselves.

The ship which is certain to sink with one man at the pumps may be saved by twenty. I therefore venture to suggest that such amendments should be made in the regulations for the sale and disposal of confiscated lands, as shall enable the Commissioner, with the approval of the Secretary for Crown Lands, to have one or more blocks of 5,000 acres each surveyed into sections of from 100 to 200 acres, to be let for seven years, at 5 per cent. on the purchase money, which might be fixed at £3 per acre, the lessee having the right to complete his purchase at any time during the continuance of his lease, which should contain the usual covenants for forfeiture in case of non-payment of rent, &c., and stringent conditions of occupation and improvement should be insisted on. A low rate of interest on a higher price than is fixed as the maximum value to be placed on land sold under the Regulations of April, 1870, would suit the lessee better than the adoption of the opposite course, and the Government would, on the whole, receive much the same amount. Although I think it might be desirable to make some other alterations in the Regulations, which experience would point out, and especially to give the Commissioner more power to meet exceptional cases as they arise, and without which power great injustice may be inflicted upon individuals, and the performance of much useful work be prevented, yet, practically, more will depend upon the manner in which the Regulations are carried out than upon the Regulations themselves. At present, there is so little on which immediate action can be taken, that the correspondence and other office work of this department can easily be carried on in Wellington. When, however, the confiscated lands can be actually dealt with, it will be absolutely necessary to make their administration more local. Not only will it be necessary for the Commissioner to decide, upon the spot, all questions connected with reserves, and to see that his instructions relative to surveys and other matters are duly carried out, and that the proper value is put upon the land which is to be sold by auction, but it is essential that intending purchasers should have some easier means of acquiring information relative to the land open for sale, and to the laws affecting it, than is furnished by official correspondence. All these advantages would be gained, and the evils of delay and uncertainty be avoided, were the work of the department conducted in Wanganui. The additional expense caused by my having an office there instead of in Wellington would be but trifling, and the benefit to the public would be considerable, and be highly appreciated. It might appear that Carlyle (Patea) would be the preferable place for the Confiscated Lands Office, as being in the centre of the district; but, taking all things into