

Before acting upon your instructions, I think it my duty to call the attention of the Government to the fact that a period of nine months has allowed time for a considerable change to have occurred in the circumstances of the West Coast District, and in that of the Colony as a whole, which may render it advisable to reconsider the matter.

From what I can learn, the engineer's survey of the line of railway from Wanganui to Taranaki does not coincide with the Railway Reserve along its whole course, and consequently there is no occasion to keep all this land for the permanent way and deviations; and as there is now every probability that the railway will be actually commenced during the next year, it seems a pity to tie up this land for any length of time, as leasing it would do, when it might be sold at a price, the interest on which would amount to many times the annual rental, especially as, under the Regulations, no purchasing clause can be given. At any rate, whether the reserve is let or sold under a regulation framed to meet the altered circumstances of the case, I suggest that nothing should be done till the survey of the line of railway is completed.

I have, &c.,

The Secretary for Crown Lands, Wellington.

ROBERT PHARAZYN,

Commissioner of Confiscated Lands.

No. 11.

Mr. R. PHARAZYN to the SECRETARY for CROWN LANDS.

SIR,—

Confiscated Lands Office, Wanganui, 7th September, 1872.

In pursuance of what appears to be a convenient plan, I have the honor to report generally upon the working of this branch of the Confiscated Lands Department.

In my first report, dated 16th June, 1870, and on other occasions, I made certain recommendations, some of which I have since more particularly urged upon the attention of the Government in various letters and minutes, and most of which have been adopted, with, as I think, beneficial results.

The most important of these recommendations were, that a proper survey staff should be at once established; that a Survey Office should be built at Carlyle, in connection with the Court House and other Government Offices required there; and that my own office should be removed to Wanganui. Much delay took place before the Government saw its way to give effect to these proposals, and in the interim, little work of a practical character could be done, though several unsettled questions were disposed of and something like order and regularity introduced in the place of the very confused system of administration which had formerly prevailed in matters connected with the confiscated lands of this district. Some small—but, to the settlers, very necessary—surveys, were executed by contract at Hawera and elsewhere, and the preparation of the Carlyle Crown grants was also commenced under the same system, of which those of only the town lots sold are actually completed, the others having been delayed in consequence of errors of survey having been discovered, these errors being a necessary consequence of the, perhaps unavoidable, hurried and unscientific manner in which the land had been surveyed for sale in 1869.

During this period I was also able to give some assistance towards the settlement of various questions connected with the Waitotara and Patea Reinstatement Fund, in which local knowledge, both of the settlers and of their properties, were required; and in the preparation of Amended Flax Regulations, and other matters of general application. Generally, however, the work of the office consisted, to a great extent, in explaining to applicants for land, either verbally or by letter, what was the existing state of things, what were the nature of the Regulations, and how much had to be done before settlers could be located upon the fertile lands of the West Coast; an object which the Government were as anxious to see accomplished as the applicants themselves.

Steps were taken to put an end to this condition of abeyance towards the end of last year, and in January I was authorized to organize a small survey staff, consisting of two field surveyors, Mr. G. W. Williams (of the firm of Wray and Williams, formerly contract surveyors in the Patea district) and Mr. Northcroft, who had had previous experience in surveying the Taranaki military settlers' allotments. Mr. Carrington was appointed Acting Chief Surveyor, but his office has been little more than nominal, as he has been almost exclusively engaged in the Public Works Department, though a moiety of his salary is charged to this. I paid a visit to my district, and met Mr. Carrington by appointment, at Carlyle, in the middle of January last, and arranged with him for the conduct of survey business in a manner which has rendered his somewhat anomalous position as little inconvenient as possible. In practice, though most of my correspondence is addressed to him, Mr. Williams takes his instructions direct from myself, and, in conjunction with Mr. Northcroft (who acts as his junior), answers all letters, prepares estimates and returns, and performs all other office work required in his department; while Mr. Marchant, the Assistant Inspector of Surveys, tests the accuracy of the work done, and decides questions of a purely professional character, which, in other offices, are usually referred to the Chief Surveyor.

As the surveyors were not put on pay till the summer was far advanced, the progress of the surveys has been much impeded by the weather, which, during this winter, has been unusually severe. However, in spite of so serious a drawback, the whole of the country seaward of Wairoa, and between the Waitotara and Patea Rivers, has been triangulated and connected with the provincial survey of the Waitotara Block. In addition to this, several road lines have been cut and traversed, as also the boundary line between the Provinces of Wellington and Taranaki, the University Reserve of 10,000 acres, Ferry Reserves, and other sections on the Waitotara and Whenuakura Rivers, laid off, rendering it now easy to complete the sectional surveys with perfect accuracy and at a moderate cost.

On the other side of the Patea River a considerable number of unalienated sections, scattered amongst the military settlers' selections, have been surveyed. These sections I have priced and scheduled for gazetting, together with the unsold sections of Carlyle, proposing to sell the whole by auction on the 26th October next.