

1873.

NEW ZEALAND.

REPORT BY INSPECTOR OF SURVEYS,

AND RETURN OF MAPS OF NATIVE LAND CLAIMS RECEIVED AT THE INSPECTOR
OF SURVEYS' OFFICE.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by command of His Excellency.

Mr. T. HEALE to the Hon. the NATIVE MINISTER.

SIR,—

Inspector of Surveys' Office, Auckland, 24th June, 1873.

I have the honor to forward a return of all maps of Native land claims which have been received at this office from its commencement and during the present year, together with their acreage in the different Provinces; also, a return of the area of land over which the trigonometrical survey is completed, with its cost in the field. This work is now so far advanced that almost all the surveys in the northern district might be based upon it if the topographical surveys were carried on under any efficient control; but so long as, in the larger class of surveys, the Natives are the surveyors' employers and their nominal paymasters, it is impossible to insist upon any rules which are burdensome to the surveyors, as the Natives would be led to believe that the expenses, already so enormous and so disproportionate to the real work performed, were created or increased by such regulations, and the discontent would be overpowering. The practice, too, which has always prevailed here, of surveyors being employed under the direction of Civil Commissioners and other Native officers, is necessarily destructive to anything like systematic survey, in which every detail ought to be carried on in subordination to the general survey, and should form part of a connected whole.

The whole subject of survey is so large, affecting, as it does, not the North Island merely, but the whole of the Colony, dependent in great measure upon constitutional questions, and intimately mixed up with the administration of Native lands and the operations of the Native Lands Court, that I am unwilling to enter upon it here at all at large, as it is clear that no efforts of a departmental officer can materially hasten a change which would affect so many interests and prejudices that it can only be carried by the vigorous initiative of a Government prepared to bear down all opposition; and, moreover, I am convinced that whenever the Government shall consider that the time has arrived for carrying out such a change, (and if the Land Transfer Act is to be effectually carried out, it is difficult to see how the disjointed state of the surveys can be ignored much longer,) no considerable difference of opinion will be found to exist in the minds of competent and experienced persons, either as to the character and extent of the defects of the present surveys, or as to the proper steps to be taken to remedy them, and to place the future surveys on a safe and satisfactory footing while affording the means of gradually rectifying the faults of the past.

But confining myself to those branches of the subject more strictly within my own functions and which fall immediately under my own observation, namely, the surveys under the Native Lands Acts and those of the confiscated territories, I am certain that the adoption of the only sound system—that of taking the whole surveys into the hands of the Government, and carrying them out under a vigorous control, and based on a sound geodetic system—would not only speedily reform the surveys, but would effect a great saving of money, if not to the Government, certainly to the community; and would remove sources of complaint which are greatly disturbing not only the Natives, but all those who are brought into any dealings with Native lands. The survey clauses of “The Native Land Bill, 1871,” (sections 62 and 73) were only permissive; but had they been carried into effect, the whole of the Native Land Court surveys would before now have fallen into the hands of the Government. By appointing in each district a surveyor, bound to perform all the surveys within it on a scale of fixed rates of payment, and in every case extending the triangulation before topographical surveys, the whole of these surveys might be executed at a cost to the Government not exceeding £6,000 per annum, the whole of which would be secured on the land and ultimately be recovered; while the saving to the Natives and the land buyers would amount at the very least to three times that sum, and all the complications and delays involved in “surveyor's liens” would be brought to an end, together with all the exasperation which they and the present extravagant survey costs produce. An addition of £1,000 to the cost of triangulation during the present year would enable it to be extended to meet all the requirements of such a system, and to perfect the work already performed; so that whatever difficulties may stand in the way of thoroughly reforming the surveys of the North parts of the Colony, by taking them all into the hands of the Government, and performing them on a thoroughly centralized system, expense is not one of them, since a great saving would be effected—immediately to the Native Land claimants and buyers of Native lands, and ultimately, in a still greater degree, to the Government.

The staff both in the office and in the field remains, with very little changes, the same as last year. Two officers have been transferred to the Public Works Department, and two junior officers have been introduced to supply their places. One officer, Mr. Parris, is employed in the field, carrying on a survey of Native land with a view to purchase by the Government. As he is more adapted for that class of work than either for the office or for triangulation, I should be glad if he could be transferred to where he might be permanently employed in field surveying.

The triangulation of the year has been in extension of that previously instituted, except a small marine survey of the mouth of the Thames River, undertaken by your direction, and finished during