

What is wanted is a very considerable extension of the fifteen years from date of grant within which road-lines may be taken up to a limit of 5 per cent. of the total area of the block. Indeed, no limit in time should be fixed; for, since the right is assumed to take land for roads through Native lands, it should not be hampered with a restriction, which in many cases virtually closes the opportunity of taking roads before it can be known where they are wanted. The proviso in section 106, preventing the taking of roads through cultivations and plantations, pas, &c., is a reasonable protection to the improvements of settlers, but no such argument applies to the land in its wild natural state. Unless the law be amended in the manner indicated, very great future inconvenience is likely to ensue.

MINING, ROAD, AND LAND TRANSFER SURVEYS.

The surveys of mining-leases, water-races, and other survey work in connection with the gold and coal mines are well in hand, there being no arrears of long standing to dispose of.

The road surveys have been principally in the exercise of rights reserved in Crown grants through lands sold without any definition of road-lines at the time of sale. This class of work has proved a very troublesome and costly legacy, for, although settlers are all eager for good road-lines, no one wishes his property intersected by them. There is often great difficulty in deciding what is best to be done as between public and private interests, for the latter cannot be ruthlessly ignored. Under the existing system in the survey of Crown lands every section fronts on to a practicable road-line, and consequently any future severance of properties is avoided.

Land Transfer surveys, as explained in former reports, are executed by private authorized surveyors, in accordance with regulations issued by the department, and in harmony with the system of survey and record of the Crown lands. As much difficulty arises in town and suburban lands, more especially in obtaining suitable points of reference to which the Land Transfer surveys may be connected, standard traverses have been made of the principal streets and road-lines of several towns and districts during the year, and blocks placed in position to afford starting and closing points. Some delay in dealing with plans has arisen in the Auckland District from the want of standard points, thereby often necessitating the investigation of the boundaries of all the surrounding properties before the plan of the property being dealt with can be certified as accurate for purposes of land transfer.

PIONEER ROAD CONSTRUCTION.

The opening-out of Crown lands by road clearings in the bush, by culverts and bridges, and by side cuttings and formations where the surface is broken or hilly, has received a great deal of attention since the introduction in 1878 of the system of improvement of Crown lands before sale. The maps of the North and Middle Islands attached indicate the localities where road-lines have been opened. The maps are on too small a scale to show any detail, but a total length of 1,330 miles has been rendered fit for horse-traffic, and, of that, about one-half is passable for drays. The cost of these operations, inclusive of certain drainage and water-race works, up to the 30th June last, has been £296,800, and an area of 1,750,000 acres has been rendered more or less accessible to the settler. During the twelve months 334 miles have been under clearing and formation, and 290 miles have been lined out and graded preparatory to being opened out.

The opening-out of Crown lands by road clearings and formations before sale becomes more and more an indispensable preliminary as settlement extends into the bush and the back-lying districts. The object in these works being simply in the first instance to enable the settler to go on to the ground with a pack-horse, a great deal remains to be done before the ideal of a macadamized road is attained. But, as the first works are laid out on practicable grades, every subsequent piece of work, from the first benching, tells towards the formation of the ultimate road.