

due to our strength having been mainly directed to the completion of the West Coast Commission surveys and those of the Native Reserves Trustee, which, in both cases, were for settlement purposes, but are not so classed, being tabled under separate headings. The whole has been forest-work: 9,581 acres of it lies at the foot of Mount Egmont and behind the Waimate Plains. The cost per acre appears high, but there are several causes combining to produce this. It is in a locality where there is no triangulation within ten miles. This means extra labour on all the circuit traverses, and, besides this, back-lines have been cut, and pegs put in at all corners of the sections, which heretofore had not been done in forest lands. The remaining 4,144 acres is north of Mokau, in the Auckland District. The cost has been increased by its out-of-the-way position, and the difficulties attendant upon Native interference as to boundaries, reserves, &c., but which are of such a nature as could not be classed under the head of "Native detention." We have on hand at the present time of rural work about twenty thousand acres, some of which will be completed shortly. The small amount finished during the year has in no way retarded settlement, we being well ahead of the market at the present time. There are about fifty thousand acres that have been offered still unsold. Had it not been for the advantages offered by and the ready acquirement of the Native leases in the open land along the coast we should doubtless have had to push this class of work faster.

*Native Land Court Surveys.*—There is only one block in hand, comprising thirty thousand acres. The plan of this is in the office, but there is a little more to do in the field before the work can be passed, so that it will not appear in this year's return. A few months since we intended to make the surveys of the Mokau-Mohakatino and Mokau-Parininihi Blocks, which were before the Native Lands Court at Waitara. But the Natives, for reasons of their own, objected to its being undertaken at present. I have, however, little doubt that during the ensuing year their objections will be removed and the work go on.

*West Coast Commission.*—Here we have 28,092 acres, costing 2s. 3d. per acre. As I predicted in my report of last year, the work has a high rate, and I feel it necessary to again point out some of the causes. First, a number of the allotments are isolated and very much scattered. They are mainly burial-grounds, sacred places, and old favourite haunts. The areas vary from a quarter of an acre upwards. These have naturally necessitated much loss of time in rough travelling, as they are all in the forest and distant from our settlement surveys. Second, nearly the whole of the remainder has been the locating of Compensation Court awards, a large number of which were only thirty-seven acres each; and the locality in which they had to be placed as directed by the Court was such as, owing to its ruggedness, was quite unfit for sections of such areas, more especially as it was forest-land. In the open land a large number were as small as twelve and a half acres. Taking the foregoing into consideration, it is only surprising that the rate is not higher.

*Reserves Trustee.*—This year we have subdivided 17,409 acres of the reserves on the coast set apart for Natives by the West Coast Commission. It has been cut into sections averaging 150 acres each, at a cost of about 1s. 6d. per acre. I do not anticipate any more of this work being required during the coming year, as, notwithstanding that there are considerable areas of these lands not yet subdivided, they are either in places the Natives wish to hold to cultivate or are some miles in the forest.

*Roads.*—A road has been surveyed for a main line from Pukearuhe to Mokau. The Parininihi Range was the greatest obstacle, as it rises very abruptly on both sides, and terminates at the coast in a cliff of 800ft. Last year we had succeeded in getting through about four miles inland with a great detour, but have now, after numerous trials, found a line two miles from the sea, with steepest grade 1 in 10. The exploring has been costly, but the advantages it affords over the former one in avoiding about nine miles of bush road and shortening the main road by at least four miles quite justifies the outlay.

*Other Work.*—The amount, £3,037 14s. 3d., appearing on the return of field-work for "Other work" requires some explanation. It includes a sum of £1,563 already expended on the survey of twenty thousand acres of settlement-work in progress, and £802 for back-pegging the sectional work in the forest at the back of the Waimate Plains and Mountain Road. Part of the back-pegging above referred to has been done with an ordinary survey party, but the greater portion by aid of the settlers' labour. The total area back-pegged is 25,227 acres, costing the department £802, or 7½d. an acre. The department undertook the provisioning of the survey parties sent in to explore for the railway route to Te Awamutu, which required a good deal of attention and management. The stores had to be sent from New Plymouth to Tongaporutu, thence taken up that river by canoe, and subsequently carried to a dépôt in the interior by Natives. I went down and made the preliminary arrangements, contracts with the Natives, &c., and left Mr. O'Donahoo on the ground to carry them out, which he was successful in doing. With the exception of the first dépôt being robbed by the Wanganui Natives, all went smoothly. This transport service was a great advantage, as it left the explorers free for their particular work. All expenses were paid by the Public Works Department through me, so that none of them are included in the return, further than Mr. O'Donahoo's salary during the time he was away exploring the Mimi Valley to Waitara and the coast railway route over Parininihi Range.

*Inspection.*—During the year I have made thirty-one inspections, visiting every survey party, with one exception. I have also visited the various road parties several times. The surveys generally I may speak of with confidence and state that, as a whole, it is first-class, and reflects great credit on both staff and temporary officers. Those surveys executed some time since in the bush country at the back of Waimate have of late stood the severest test in the cutting of the back lines of sections for back-pegging. In the 25,000 acres done there has not been found a single serious discrepancy, thus proving to a certainty that the circuit traverses upon which the whole was based are excellent. The mean error in traverse closes for the year is 1·8 links per mile; the maximum, 5 links. Besides travelling on inspection, I have been about the district at different times with members of the West Coast Commission and the Reserves Trustee on matters connected with their particular work.