

106. We have deliberately omitted from our recommendations any suggestion as to meeting the case of a lessee not wishing to take a renewal. We have assumed, seeing that the intention is that the lease should be perpetually renewable, that the lessee will accept the renewal as each successive term expires. It would be always open to him to dispose of his lease at any time and on such terms as he may think fit. Nevertheless, this is a matter which counsel may desire to consider, and it may be necessary to include in the scheme some provision to meet the point.

107. We would recommend that the proposed Bill should include a provision that no amendment of the Valuation of Land Act, or any other Act, altering the definition of "unimproved value" shall apply to these West Coast Reserve leases unless the amending legislation expressly so provides. We would also respectfully recommend that, if legislation on the lines we have suggested is passed, no Government should, at the instance of either the lessees or the Maori owners, permit any future legislation affecting the interests of either the one or the other unless such legislation has been considered and approved by both the lessees and the Maoris as well as the Native Trustee, or, in the event of the lessees and the Maoris not being in agreement, without first submitting the proposals to some competent and independent authority for inquiry and report. Otherwise there will always be the danger of a repetition of the agitation caused by the Act of 1935, which itself is reminiscent of the agitation created by the various Acts preceding the Act of 1892.

108. It was suggested during the proceedings before us that an authoritative record should be compiled in regard to all the leases showing the original condition of the land comprised in each lease, whether swamp, heavy bush land, light bush, flax, tutu, and generally the nature of the land, also as far as possible what improvements, including bush-felling, clearing, and grassing, were effected, and when, and the original cost, if possible. The suggestion we think is a good one, and we recommend its adoption by the Native Trustee as an administrative matter—it should not require legislation. The ascertainment and compilation of these particulars would not be easy, but the difficulties will become greater year by year as the old settlers disappear and memories fail. For example, we were told that Mr. Alan Good was one of the few remaining persons who had grown up in the district and had accurate knowledge as to the original condition of these lands, but he is now dead. The record may not be so necessary if the system of computing the rent be altered as we have recommended, but it would still be useful, and situations might arise in the future in which the record might be very important and its absence productive of great trouble and difficulty.

109. In this report we have not answered *seriatim* the various questions into which Your Excellency's Commission directed us to inquire, but we think that we have nevertheless covered all the ground, and that this report will be found to contain a comprehensive survey of the relevant facts and circumstances, and of our own views and recommendations.

We have the honour to be,
Your Excellency's humble and obedient servants,
MICHAEL MYERS, Chairman.
A. M. SAMUEL, Member.
HANARA TANGIAWHA REEDY, Member.

Wellington, 8th March, 1948.

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