

1907.

NEW ZEALAND.

THE OTAWHAO A AND RAKAUTATAHI NATIVE-LAND
BLOCKS, HAWKE'S BAY.

(INTERIM REPORT OF THE NATIVE LAND TENURE COMMISSION.)

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

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

We have the honour to forward a report on two blocks in the Hawke's Bay District called Rakautatahi and Otawhao A.

The block called Rakautatahi consists of 11,860 acres, and it has been divided into five blocks, which have been further subdivided. The subdivisions numbered No. 1A, No. 2A, No. 3A, and No. 5A, consisting of 1,866 acres, have been purchased by the Crown; the balance of the block, 9,994 acres, is owned by Native owners. This balance has been subdivided into fourteen subdivisions, as shown in the Schedule hereto. More than half of the land is occupied by some of the owners, and we recommend that the block should be disposed of as appears in the Schedule. Some of the owners in possession have sheep, cattle, and horses on the lands they hold, which they have improved and fenced. There are on the block a substantially built woolshed, and other farm buildings, which are used by the various owners. Crops have been raised on parts of the land. We find, however, that what we have referred to in our previous reports exists here—namely, that the Maori owners who are in possession have really no title. For example, there are in some of the sections five, six, seven, or more owners. Perhaps only one of the owners is in possession, and he occupies the land with the tacit consent of the other owners, but has no legal title from them. If any of the owners were to die, the devisees or successors could interfere with his possession. This might necessitate further partition, which might make the land useless for a farm. It is necessary that those who are in possession should have leases and have some title. We are glad to say that the owners are all willing that this should be arranged.

The condition of this block also shows the need of instructors in agriculture visiting the Maoris, and making suggestions to them as to how their land should be scientifically farmed. It will be noticed from the Schedule that we suggest that a considerable area should be leased by public auction, and this recommendation the owners assent to.

As to the Block No. 2B, which is owned by forty-one owners, part of it has been and is occupied by one Te Karini Rukiruki (No. 36 on list of owners), who has improved the land though he owns only two fifty-fifths of the area. The owners numbered 6, 29, and 30 on the list of owners are desirous that he should be left in possession, at all events, of all the areas they are entitled to, amounting to about 62½ acres, including Rukiruki's share. We suggest that the land should be partitioned, Rukiruki getting a lease of the shares mentioned along with his own, and the balance should be put up to auction for lease. Rukiruki has been in possession for seven or eight years.

We are glad to be able to state that some of those who desire leases are young men, intelligent, active, and, from what we can learn, enterprising and thrifty.