

REPORT OF MR. JAMES MACKAY.

SIR,—

Paeroa, 15th May, 1907.

In accordance with your request, I forward herewith a statement of the recent land-purchase operations conducted by me in this district to the present date.

I premise my report by stating that as active business was only commenced in October last it is impossible to show as great results as might otherwise have been anticipated.

The blocks that have been chiefly operated on are in the Waihou-Piako district, and are owned by the Ngatimaru and the antagonistic Ngatihako Tribes respectively. The former are some of the original land-league people, formed prior to the Waikato War of 1864–66, and were naturally not desirous of alienating their lands. The Ngatihako have always been persistent in opposing surveys, and any form of European dealings with their lands, on one occasion exemplified by shooting and severely wounding a member of a survey party. It therefore became a question requiring careful negotiation, considerable reflection, and correct gauging of the minds of the Natives before proceeding to the disbursement of the purchase-money.

The first payments in connection with land in this district were made by me on the 18th December last, from which period steady and satisfactory progress has been made, which is shown in the tabulated Return No. 1 enclosed herewith.

The Ngatitamatera Reserve, of 3,029 acres, at Ohinemuri has been acquired with the exception of the interests of sixty-eight persons, for whom succession orders have been applied for, and will be dealt with by the Native Land Court sitting here on the 21st instant.

The Ngaromaki Block, of 2,000 acres, at Tararu, Thames, has been arranged for, but it was found that the interests of three persons, the names of whom have been added under the provisions of the Equitable Owners Act, had not been defined by the Native Land Court which admitted them to the ownership of the block. In this case application has been made to the Native Land Court to ascertain the relative interests of the owners. This also comes on here at the sitting of the Court on the 21st instant.

The Te Awaiti blocks, with two exceptions, have not been dealt with, as the Natives are not satisfied with the price. A considerable area of dry land contained in these is now used by the Natives for residence and cultivation, and adequate reserves must be made there.

Negotiations for the Waitakaruru Block have been commenced, but the Natives are not satisfied with the price tendered. They have offered some other blocks in that neighbourhood, and I am awaiting the receipt of the tracing of the whole from the Crown Lands Office at Auckland before taking further action. The same applies to Pipiroa and other blocks fronting the coast between the Piako River and the Miranda.

In the Coromandel portion of the district the County Council have urged the purchase of large areas which principally belong to the Ngatitamatera Tribe, the majority of whom reside in the neighbourhood of Ohinemuri. Taking into consideration the fact that the lands occupied and cultivated by these people at Ohinemuri will shortly be rendered useless by the floods now frequently occurring through the silting-up of the Ohinemuri River, caused by the deposit of tailings and mining *débris* therein, I therefore recommend that this question be left in abeyance for the present. However, I beg to suggest that the lands owned by the Ngatiwhanaunga Tribe, in the Cape Colville Block, should be acquired, and a portion of those of the Ngatimaru and Tawera Tribes also.

In the Matamata district the purchase of the Whangorau, Taramoarahi, and the Wairenga Blocks was authorised, it being particularly desirable that these should be acquired by the Crown in order to facilitate drainage operations connected with the special settlements in that neighbourhood. I have arranged the price with some of the persons interested, and others are unwilling to accede to the terms offered. The Native Land Court was sitting at Cambridge last month in cases in which the owners of the above block were interested, a circumstance which I took advantage of to discuss the question with them. It was, however, found that the list of Native owners was defective. The title to these blocks had been investigated several years ago when the custom of the Court was to record the names of the owners only, and leave their relative interests in the block undefined.

In the case of the Whangorau Block an application had been made to the Court to ascertain the relative interests of the owners. I therefore caused similar applications to be made in respect of the Taramoarahi and Whakatakataka Blocks, and the Government arranged for a sitting of the Native Land Court to be held at Cambridge for the purpose of arranging these questions. The sitting will be held on the 21st instant, after which dealings with the above blocks will be resumed.

Large areas in the neighbourhood of Te Aroha and Matamata have been offered for sale by the Natives, particulars of which, together with similar offers of land elsewhere, are shown in Return No. 2 forwarded herewith.

In all dealings with the Natives I have, before purchasing their interests, ascertained that they were individually possessed of sufficient lands elsewhere for their occupation and support. It is also proposed to reserve from sale a considerable area at Te Kerepehi and Te Awaiti as a permanent inalienable reserve (*papakainga*) for the Ngatihako people.

I anticipate by the 30th June next to be able to show very material progress in land operations, as meanwhile many obstacles will have been removed by the action of the Native Land Court.

I have, &c.,

JAMES MACKAY,
Native Land Purchase Officer.

The Under-Secretary, Lands Department, Wellington.