

1908.
NEW ZEALAND.

NATIVE LANDS AND NATIVE-LAND TENURE:

INTERIM REPORT OF NATIVE LAND COMMISSION ON NATIVE LANDS IN THE COUNTY OF WHAKATANE.

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

Native Land Commission, Dargaville, 23rd March, 1908.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

We have the honour to transmit a further interim report on Native lands in the County of Whakatane. Evidence was taken at Rotorua, Whakatane, and Ruatoki. This report covers 158,345 acres, and practically disposes of the larger blocks in the Whakatane County outside the Urewera Native Reserve. The lands belong to the Ngatirangitihi Tribe, of Matata; the Ngatiawa living at Whakatane, Te Teko, and Te Awaateatua; the Ngatimanawa and Patuheuheu living near Galatea; and certain sections of the Tuhoe (Urewera), the Ngatiawa being the principal owners.

The Whakatane lands were confiscated, the confiscation-line being coterminous with the southern boundaries of the Parishes of Matata, Rangitaiki, and Waimana. The lands now owned by the Maoris in the Parishes of Matata, Rangitaiki, and Waimana were granted to them out of confiscated lands under "The Whakatane Grants Validation Act, 1878." Until 1893 the titles were in a position similar to those of lands held under "The Native Land Act, 1867," the original grants having been issued to trustees who were for all purposes absolute owners. In 1893 provision was made (section 2 of "The Native Trusts and Claims Definition and Registration Act, 1893") by which the *cestuis qui trustent* could take advantage of "The Native Equitable Owners Act, 1886," and become certificated owners of the returned lands. The investigation of titles to these lands has been proceeding off and on since 1893, and at the end of last year most of the larger blocks had been subdivided into family holdings.

The Papatupu Blocks—namely, the blocks outside the confiscated area, over which the Native custom obtained, and determined ownership—consist of Matahina, Tuararangaia, Putauaki, parts of the Pokohu, and Waiohau. The value of Pokohu D, area 5,510 acres, is only £413; of Pokohu C and E, area 14,876 acres, only £115. Tuararangaia is valued at less than 5s. an acre, and Waiohau at 10s. an acre. The Matahina Block, of about 40,000 acres, is valued for pastoral purposes at £3,275. But there is valuable milling-timber on it estimated at 306,000,000 ft., the royalty for which at current prices should produce at least £75,000. For the rest, the land is suitable only for pastoral runs, to be held in large areas.

The Natives are desirous that these large blocks may be incorporated under section 28 of "The Maori Land Claims Adjustment and Laws Amendment Act, 1907," with power to dispose of the lands and timber by public auction, after making reserves for papakaingas and farms. We have put in the schedule a list of the blocks