

Taranaki District; (2) the reserves of various areas scattered over other parts of the Dominion; (3) the control of the estates of minors under appointments made by the Native Land Court: there are about 140 of these minors, representing properties valued at £101,000.

1. The West Coast Settlement Reserves comprise an area of 193,966 acres scattered over Taranaki, from Whitecliffs, north of New Plymouth, to Waitotara, in the south, and granted to the Natives after the war. They were first brought under the control of the Public Trustee in 1881 by the West Coast Settlement Reserves Act of that year. The dominant trust imposed by that Act was "for the benefit of the Native race and the promotion of settlement." This expression of the trust was not reproduced under the consolidating Act of 1892, but the powers to lease were amplified and the provision for the payment of the rents to the Natives was elaborate, so that the dominant trust of the reserves is in effect continued. In addition to the power to lease generally, a special power was conferred to grant to the Natives themselves licenses to occupy for cultivation and residence.

Under this Act, as subsequently amended, leases for a term of thirty years for agricultural purposes were granted, conferring on the lessees on the expiry of their leases a right to valuation for improvements to the extent of £5 per acre.

Then in 1892 new legislation was substituted, and under this leases for twenty-one years, with a right of perpetual renewal for a like term, were authorized.

Legislation was also passed enabling the thirty-year tenants to convert their holdings into perpetual leasehold, but 135 tenants did not take advantage of this.

The position now is that of the total area of 193,996 acres above mentioned, 18,400 acres are held by Europeans under a thirty-year lease, 120,110 acres under renewable lease, 4,890 acres under various tenures without right of renewal or compensation, and 24,800 acres by Native beneficiaries under licenses at will. The balance of 25,798 acres has been hitherto retained for use as *papakāingas* or commonages. There was and is no special legislative authorization for so doing, and now about 7,000 acres of this area have been subdivided and are about to be granted to the Natives, under license.

There are 934 current leases to Europeans and 368 licenses to Natives.

The reserves are divided into over 200 Crown grants, each having a separate set of owners, who number between four and five thousand, mostly residing in Taranaki. These are the beneficiaries.

According to the last return available the annual rents from the European leases amount to £24,061, and from the licenses held by Natives to £6,513.

So far as the leased portion of the reserves is concerned, the duties of the Trustee consist in collecting the rents from the tenants and distributing them amongst the Natives entitled, in attending to renewals, and consenting to transfers and dealings. For the former purpose great trouble and care are involved in keeping a record of the various successions that occur amongst the Natives. The calculation of the various proportions of rent and the payment, which as far as possible is made personally to each Native, likewise involve special trouble. For these services the Trust Office has hitherto charged a commission of $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. on the rents from the European leases and $3\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. on the rentals from the Natives, and the total commission earned is £2,048 per annum.

All this work is largely routine and mechanical, and the books and office arrangements for carrying it out appeared to us to be above criticism. There has been no suggestion, and we see no reason for the view, that this work is otherwise than carefully and satisfactorily done. The question of management as regards the leased areas scarcely arises except with regard to periodical inspection.

It is acknowledged that inspection of areas under occupation has not been so frequent as it ought to be. Inadequacy of staff is expressed as the cause.