

a period of fifteen years, payable in half-yearly instalments, with the material concession that no rent is payable under such license to occupy in respect of the first five years of such license.

The plain intention of section 20 of this Act of 1912 was to encourage the settlement of the gum lands by the gum-digger and other landless men, for not only do the regulations limit the size of holdings to 100 acres, but they also prevent the exploitation of the gum-digging rights on the holding by restricting the right to dig for gum thereon to the selector and members of his family.

Liberal as are the provisions of section 20, your Commissioners regret to have to report that very little good has resulted from them up to the present. The requirements of the section that the land should be set apart in allotments has in a large measure destroyed the efficacy of the section as a means of rapidly settling such lands. Indeed, it may be said that section 20 simply provides for the settlement of the lands in the ordinary methods, which experience has proved are quite inapplicable to the circumstances prevailing on the kauri-gum reserves. It is suggested that some consideration should be given to those actually residing on the reserves.

It may be pointed out that a large number of gum-diggers are now living on the kauri-gum reserves without any title to the land beyond that which might have been inferred from their license to dig under the Kauri-gum Industry Act, 1908. This Act gave the digger the right to dig for gum on the reserves, but he was expressly restricted from taking up any land on such reserves either as a residence or business site. It was not until the amending Act of 1910 became law that the digger was in a position to select any area whatever on a kauri-gum reserve. It may be noted, however, that some of the residents on the reserves have availed themselves of the provisions of the Act of 1910 and have applied for their residential areas.

While your Commissioners are of opinion that the successful settlement of the gum lands by men possessing little or no capital can only be brought about by a gradual process, following on the lines previously indicated—that is, by the breaking-in of such lands by the State before disposing of them—nevertheless, in order to meet the requirements of any one desirous of taking up the lands in their present undeveloped condition, they recommend that section 20 of the Land Act, 1912, be amended so as to provide that any portion of a kauri-gum reserve may be proclaimed as open for selection as “unsurveyed land,” in lieu of land in allotments as at present stipulated in section 20; provision being made subsequently by regulations that such selections can only be made in accordance with a scheme of subdivision prepared by the Commissioner of Crown Lands, and that some degree of preference be given to men who have continuously resided on such land, say, for a period of six months prior to the date on which the land was proclaimed as being open for selection.

SAND-DRIFT ON THE PENINSULA NORTH OF AHIPARA.

A matter affecting that portion of the narrow peninsula extending northward from Ahipara for fifty miles to a point within about three miles of the North Cape is the rapid advance of the sand-drift, which threatens, if unchecked, to cover the whole of the area indicated. The stretch of country within the limits described comprises an area of 301,000 acres, of which 100,000 acres are Crown lands, represented by areas included in kauri-gum reserves, education reserves, and unoccupied Crown lands. Your Commissioners were much impressed with the seriousness of the position, and at various meetings endeavoured to obtain specific evidence of the rate of progress of the drift. Although the evidence given was not based on any actual measurements taken, and is of a somewhat general character, it, at all events, tends to emphasize the necessity of some immediate action being taken to check the advance of the sand.

At Hohoura, Mr. F. McGrath, a resident of sixteen years, stated the drift had advanced half a mile during his time, and mentioned a particular swamp