

As a whole, it would be difficult to find anywhere a parallel for the almost parsimonious scale of salaries paid to the professional men engaged in this service. Before dismissing this part of the subject, common justice demands that I should report my high opinion of the exemplary and valuable services of Mr. McIntyre, whose special professional knowledge and former experience in an adjoining colony have been, in no small degree, a cause of the great success which has attended this branch of your administration.

Last year I addressed you in strong terms on the subject of the very unsatisfactory condition of the public surveys, and, in substance, expressed an opinion, which has become more confirmed by subsequent experience, that it most materially concerns not only the safe working of the Land Transfer system, but the social welfare of the whole Colony and the credit of its Government, that the Legislature should, without further delay, arrest the progress of the immeasurable evil which is daily growing out of the sham system of public surveys, so long the disgrace of the Colony. Representations on this subject have been made from the Crown Lands Department, and I believe other sources; and it may be stated with the authority of truth, that in the minds of all specially informed men there exists no doubt of the necessity for an immediate reform in the matter of public surveys. The record maps which are necessary for public use in this department are, as to some parts of the Colony, entirely wanting, and in other instances, what purport to be record maps are simply an illusion. Whatever sacrifice of present means may be required for the remedy, I must be forgiven for stating that the emergent nature of the case demands that it should be made.

Within the limits of a document like this, it is impossible to state, in detail, the particular circumstances of the danger which now exists, or by argument to demonstrate the fact that the evil grows in a geometrical ratio with the delay in applying a cure. If necessary of particular demonstration, Parliament may easily procure it by calling for evidence; but it would occur to most ordinary observers, that the survey of the public and private estate of the Colony is a matter of the greatest consequence to social comfort, and that a defective survey must necessarily be the cause of social disorder and disquiet—the prolific source of distressing and wasteful litigation, to say nothing of the great damage that must some day be felt by the Public Treasury.

I am afraid that the general public have long been too much in the habit of disregarding the particular necessity for accurate surveys of the Native lands which are coming and must at law come under the Land Transfer Act, and the title to which, so materially dependent upon the soundness of the survey, is already guaranteed to a considerable extent by the Public Treasury.

The dilemma in which I consider the country stands may be stated thus:—

Recently, following an intelligent impulse, the Colony adopted the Torrens' system as a very great social advantage. One feature of that system is, that it invites popular acceptance by a guaranty of all titles effected under it. This guaranty by statute attaches the consolidated revenues. It is essential to a reduction of the risk under that guaranty to a minimum, that, among other things, and principally, the surveys of each estate should be scientifically correct. It is demonstrable that a very large proportion of all the estates in the country, public and private, are inaccurately surveyed, more or less. Notwithstanding all the vigilance of the lawyers and professional draftsmen in the department, under the present condition of the public surveys it is impossible to deny that an immeasurable risk of damage, referable to the imperfection of the surveys alone, exists. That this condition of things is reported to the public, who are consequently called upon to elect (in obedience to a logical deduction of interest from facts) between an abandonment of all the advantages of the Torrens' system, with its accompanying guaranty, or a rectification of the sham survey; the choice being between retrogression from useful reform, and the immediate expenditure of a comparatively small sum of money in the purchase of safety and business-like accuracy in the public surveys, which must be acknowledged as a principal basis of the social order and prosperity of any community.

DEEDS REGISTRY.

The estimated revenue from this department for the last year was £15,000, and the revenue actually received, £14,789 8s. 6d.

The extraordinary expense attendant upon removing the furniture and records into new offices in different parts of the Colony, and the cost of building a fire-proof strong-room in Auckland, have caused the vote to be exceeded by a small amount.

I have no special remark to make with reference to this department, beyond stating my opinion that it is in a very efficient condition, and that the gentlemen employed in this branch of the service have performed their duties to my entire satisfaction. I anticipate a material decrease in the revenue of the department for the ensuing year, and therefore only estimate the revenue at £13,500. The ordinary expenditure I cannot see my way to reducing to any appreciable extent. Having introduced the system of *ad valorem* payment in the clerical branch, the expenditure will be, in a great degree, proportionate to the revenue received.

I have, &c.,

W. S. MOORHOUSE,
Registrar-General of Land and Deeds.