

1877.

NEW ZEALAND.

SALE OF THE WAIROA BLOCK

(CORRESPONDENCE RESPECTING THE).

Laid upon the Table of the House of Representatives by the Hon. Mr. Reid.

No. 1.

Mr. H. B SEALY to the UNDER SECRETARY for CROWN LANDS.

SIR,—

Crown Lands Office, Napier, 11th February, 1876.

I have the honor to forward a copy of a letter received by me from Mr. Percy Smith, of the General Government Survey Department, under whose directions the survey of the Wairoa Confiscated Block is being executed. You will observe that Mr. Smith considers that the survey of the unsold portion of the block into sections of about 300 acres each, as suggested by me in accordance with the amended regulations of the 17th March, 1875, would be an unnecessary expense, and he recommends that it should be offered for sale in lots of from 2,000 to 5,000 acres for the reasons given in his letter.

I have not been able to personally inspect the land on account of its distance from Napier, but I think it very probable that the block, however laid out, will fall into the hands of two or three, or possibly half a dozen, buyers, most of the military settlers' claims having been brought up by a few runholders.

If the Government concur in Mr. Smith's suggestions, it will be necessary to amend the seventh clause of the regulations of 17th March, 1875 (*Gazette*, page 201). (*Vide* Enclosure 2).

I have to request that I may be favoured with instructions on this subject.

I have, &c.,

The Under Secretary for Crown Lands,
Wellington.

H. B. SEALY,
Wairoa Confiscated Lands Commissioner.

Enclosure 1 in No. 1.

MR. PERCY SMITH to the COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS, Napier.

SIR,—

Survey Office, Wairoa, 8th January, 1876.

I have the honor to bring under your notice certain matters in connection with the Wairoa Confiscated Block now under survey, which I think the Government should be informed of before proceeding further in the matter. The instructions I received from you in relation to this block were, first, that certain selections made by military settlers were to be marked off on the ground, after which the surplus area was to be subdivided into 300-acre lots for sale.

It is with special reference to these lots that I now address you. From information obtained from the surveyor engaged upon the work, and from my own observations, I have ascertained that the character of that part of the block which it is proposed to cut up into small farms is of such an exceedingly broken nature that it will never be available for agricultural purposes; that the difficulty of giving access to each lot by roads available for wheeled vehicles will be such that the cost of construction of roads would exceed the value of the whole of the portion proposed to be so subdivided.

The only use that can be made of these back parts of the block will be as small sheep-runs of from 2,000 to 5,000 acres in extent. The soil is good generally, but covered with a rank growth of tutu, fern, and scrub, and appears capable of taking grass, but it is everywhere too precipitous to allow of the use of the plough. I am of opinion that the subdivision into farms of the proposed size—namely, 300 acres—is simply a waste of time and money, as I feel convinced that they would not meet any sale as such, but might be purchased *en masse* as a run, in which case of course the subdivision survey would be so much money thrown away.

In the event of the block being divided into lots of from 2,000 to 5,000 acres, it would not then be so difficult to provide access to them by a few roads, which would be also available and necessary as outlets to the country lying beyond and outside the confiscated block.

I have deemed it my duty to bring this matter before you before proceeding any further than the completion of the survey of the selections already made, with a view to prevent the waste of a large sum of money in surveys, which I feel convinced will never produce any return; but, at the same time, I shall be most happy to carry out your former instructions in their entirety, should you wish it.

In reference to the progress of the surveys, it will probably be six weeks yet before the selections are completed. Mr. Cussen, who is performing the work, has had a great many difficulties to encounter, more especially from the scantiness of the information relating to former surveys to be obtained. The Waste Lands Office, Napier; the Inspector of Surveys' Office, Auckland; and the Secretary for Crown Lands and Defence Offices, Wellington, have been searched for information bearing on the subject, without bringing to light anything more than imperfect and unconnected plans, which has necessarily entailed a great deal of additional work and expense in the field before the survey could be brought (as it now is) to form an integral part of a connected and coherent whole, and which (owing to the extension of the geodetic survey over the whole district) will, I hope, enable your department to issue Crown grants upon a more satisfactory basis than has hitherto been the case in this district.

In conclusion, I have the honor to request that you will be good enough to inform me as to whether Lot 112 (adjoining the Pakowhai Reserve) has been selected or not. I have received from Mr. J. P. Hamlin an application to have a Native reserve laid off there of 100 acres; but, before doing so, wish to learn whether the land is open for such a purpose.

I have, &c.,

PERCY SMITH,

Chief Geodetic Surveyor, in charge Wairoa District.

The Commissioner of Crown Lands, Napier.

Minute by the Inspector of Surveys on Enclosure No. 1.

MR. SMITH'S very sensible and well-explained recommendation is quite in accordance with my opinion. As a rule, only tolerable level lands, accessible by roads, not requiring large costs to make them available, are suitable for subdivision into small farm stations. Very broken lands, unsuitable for ploughing, not capable of taking grass with surface sowing, should only be divided by such sectional roads as are likely to be required for thoroughfare. The large blocks so defined can then be dealt with either whole, or occasionally subdivided by a right line, according to the applications made.

14th March, 1876.

THEOS. HEALE.

Enclosure 2 in No. 1.

EXTRACT FROM ORDER IN COUNCIL DATED 17TH MARCH, 1875.

SECTION 7.—All lands which shall remain unallotted after the satisfaction of all claims which may under the foregoing Regulations be allowed by the said Commissioner shall be surveyed into suitable allotments of not less than forty nor more than three hundred and twenty acres in extent, and shall be sold by auction by the said Commissioner at Napier for cash, at such upset price as shall be fixed by the Commissioner and approved by the Secretary for Crown Lands, and after two months' notice shall have been given by public advertisement of such sale. And the said Commissioner is hereby empowered to prescribe the conditions of sale, which shall be read publicly at the commencement of such sale.

No. 2.

MR. C. E. HAUGHTON to the INSPECTOR of SURVEYS, Auckland.

SIR,—

General Crown Lands Office, Wellington, 28th March, 1876.

With reference to Mr. Percy Smith's recommendation, which was referred to you while in Wellington, that the Wairoa Confiscated Block should be surveyed into sections of from 2,000 to 5,000 acres each for small farms, in which you concurred, I have the honor to request you will be so good as to take, with as little delay as possible, the necessary steps to have the survey of the block into the size of the sections proposed carried out.

I have, &c.,

C. E. HAUGHTON,

Under Secretary for Crown Lands.

The Inspector of Surveys, Auckland.

No. 3.

The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS, Auckland, to the UNDER SECRETARY for CROWN LANDS.

(Telegram.)

15th August, 1877.

WAIROA land reported by Chief Surveyor to be simply lands of the third class, their disposal subject to provisions of "Waste Lands Act, 1874," by which the upset price of land of that class is fixed at five shillings an acre. Does not the provision of section 14 of "The Waste Lands Act, 1876," relate only to land purchased with the proceeds of the sale of confiscated lands?

D. A. TOLE,

Commissioner of Crown Lands.

The Under Secretary for Crown Lands, Wellington.

No. 4.

The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS, Auckland, to the UNDER SECRETARY for CROWN LANDS.
(Telegram.)

Auckland, 28th August, 1877.

COPY of Chief Surveyor's report on Wairoa Block has been posted to you. The precipitous nature and inferior character of the land, added to the extreme difficulty of procuring practicable roads through the block, render it entirely unsuitable for small farms.

The Hon. the Secretary for Crown Lands,
Wellington.

D. A. TOLE,
Commissioner of Crown Lands.

No. 5.

EXTRACT FROM CHIEF SURVEYOR'S REPORT ON THE WAIROA BLOCK.

THE Wairoa Confiscated Block, situated between the Wairoa and Waiau, is distant from Clyde, the Port of Wairoa, some $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles, and is connected with it by a good dray road. The land open for sale on this block consists of the back portion, and has been subdivided into lots of areas above indicated. The quality of the soil is everywhere good, and is generally covered with a dense growth of fern and tutu on the hills, with deep gullies generally with bush in them, and plentifully supplied with water. The surface is formed of a series of ridges, averaging some 1,200 feet high, with little or no level land. It is, however, well adapted for small sheep-runs. The bush found in the gullies is generally light, consisting principally of kowhai, titoki, tawa, and a little totara and rimu here and there. Grass seems to take well where the fern has been burnt off. On adjacent lands near the coast the fern has very generally disappeared from the hills, before the fires and the sheep, and they are now covered with a fine sward of the Native poa grass, which seems to extend itself immediately the surface is denuded of fern; and these same hills are described as having been a few years since as thickly covered with fern and tutu as the country now open in the Wairoa Block.

