

No. 3.

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL to the Hon. the MINISTER OF LANDS.

(Telegram.)

Hon. W. Rolleston, Wellington.

Dunedin, 25th April, 1882.

IN reply to your telegram of 24th instant, about West Coast Surveys, I have read Sir W. Fox's report of 17th April, and Captain Skeet's memorandum. I see no difficulty in the way of Survey Department carrying on the survey and subdivision of Native reserves from general descriptions of the awards by the Commissioner. Taking Captain Skeet's statement of the work to be done, his estimate of time and cost is, I think, rather under than over the probable cost—that is to say, if all the subdivisions are to be marked on the ground by lines cut through the bush. I would suggest that no subdivision-lines be cut in the bush, except where necessary for the actual occupation of Natives resident on the ground; and, in the case of the exterior boundaries of blocks, only so much as may be necessary to define the limits of old surveys, or fix the position of natural boundaries. This would give sufficient data from which to issue Crown grants. If these suggestions are approved, the work might be allotted between the Commission and staff surveyors, the latter being temporarily increased by, say, two surveyors, and the whole operations completed within twelve months.

Regarding the settlement of the Native blocks by Europeans, no mere cutting up of a rugged bush-country by survey-lines will effect that. The opening of the country by road-clearings is a prime essential. It therefore follows that, as the hapu subdivisions will be arbitrary lines, no more surveying need be done at first than is necessary to show the subdivisions on a plan correct as to exterior boundaries. The subsequent European occupation-surveys would follow from time to time as required, on the basis of the Crown-grant surveys. If time and expense were no object, it would be better no doubt to delay the hapu subdivisions until the selection and clearing of road-lines were done, and so have the opportunity of endeavouring to arrange hapu subdivisions to be coterminous with the sections to be subsequently offered for settlement. But this, of course, would not meet the exigencies of the case, as stated by Sir W. Fox.

JAMES MCKERROW,
Surveyor-General.

No. 4.

THE WEST COAST COMMISSIONER to the Hon. the MINISTER OF LANDS.

SIR,—

New Plymouth, West Coast Commission Office, 9th June, 1882.

I have the honor to refer you to my letter of the 17th April last on the subject of the surveys remaining to be executed in this district, and also to the telegram by the Surveyor-General on the subject, dated Dunedin, 25th April, and to the discussion on the same between yourself, the Hon. the Native Minister, and myself, a few days after that, in your office at Wellington. Since that I have had much consultation on the subject with Captain Skeet, Chief Surveyor to my Commission, and Mr. Humphries, Chief District Surveyor of Taranaki, and have shown them my letter to you above referred to, and Mr. McKerrow's telegram. Both those gentlemen are of opinion that the suggestions made by the Surveyor-General would fail to accomplish the object which the very existence of my Commission implies, namely, the final and complete fulfilment of the promises and engagements of the Government towards the Natives. Grants issued, which were in any way incomplete, and which would require amplification or correction of the plans put upon them, would not in practice achieve the object of putting the Natives, either by hapus or individually, in possession of lands, with such definite and ascertained boundaries on the ground, as to enable them to hold them against others, or to utilize them by lease or otherwise. Whatever was now omitted would have to be supplied hereafter, and in the meantime almost as much uncertainty would exist with regard to specific ownership, and definition of the mutual rights of the Crown and the Natives as exists now.

For my own part, I am quite prepared to acquiesce in any proposal which combines the elements of finality and certainty; but short of these, the work would be practically useless, and its end almost as far postponed as ever.

I am afraid that, under all the circumstances, there is no other course than that already recommended by me, the increase of the survey staff of the Commission to such an extent as will enable the work to be done in one year, or a little more, which otherwise will only be accomplished in two, three, or more. The cost, as before explained, will be no greater if the work be executed in the shorter period than in the longer, but rather the contrary, as the salary of the Chief Surveyor and other indoor operators would be saved.

I enclose some notes by Captain Skeet on Mr. McKerrow's telegram, from a professional point of view, and a few by myself of a more general character. I pretend to no professional knowledge on the subject.

If the Government concurs in the course suggested, I would propose that no increase be made till after the winter, as but little progress would be made during the bad weather; but as soon as the spring approaches, I would make the necessary arrangements.

I have, &c.,

WILLIAM FOX,
West Coast Commissioner.

The Hon. the Minister of Crown Lands.

Enclosure 1 in No. 4.

MEMORANDUM by Captain SKEET on Mr. MCKERROW'S Telegram.

A BLOCK represents a large extent of country to be dealt with, and careful survey must be made of this block for the purpose of ascertaining correct area, because the whole area is afterwards subdivided into hapu awards *pro rata*.