

In the area 7,665 acres of lands “not dealt with,” is included an area of papatupu blocks estimated at 3,612 acres. One-half the area shown as available for general settlement consists of land vested in the Maori Land Board under section 8 of “The Maori Land Settlement Act, 1905,” viz. :—

						A.	R.	P.
Otakanini (27 subdivisions)	..	..	..	..	..	7,516	1	8
Pouto 2E, Nos. 1 and 2	..	..	..	..	..	12,726	0	0
						20,242	1	8

The Board has prepared a scheme of settlement in the case of Otakanini, under which 200 acres are reserved for papakaingas, and three sections amounting to about 360 acres are set aside for lease to Maori applicants. About one-fourth of this block consists of sandhills. An owner in this block named Rihari Pungaroa had, prior to the vesting of the land in the Board, agreed to give a lease of 80 acres to a European named Macdonald, who got possession of the land, paid rent, and improved it. No title has, however, been issued to him. Rihari is anxious that his arrangement should be made valid. There is a question whether the Board can validate it. If not, it is a case, in our opinion, in which the Legislature should intervene, and empower the Board to issue a valid lease. The Board has not yet cut up the Pouto Block. The Native owners are anxious to reserve an area of 1,830 acres for farms and papakaingas. We have forwarded their representations for the consideration of the Board.

Under the Act of 1905 the Board can only lease the lands vested in it. It has no power of sale. The area dealt with by the Commission and recommended for general settlement is 19,332 acres and 22 perches, of which the owners desire 16,120 acres and 22 perches to be sold, and 3,212 acres to be leased. The area for sale consists chiefly of a subdivision of Pouto Block (E. No. 10) containing 14,889 acres, reported to be mostly sandhills. We are of opinion that these should be acquired by the Crown, which may be able to cope with the sand-drift by planting suitable grasses, or, as has been done in parts of France on the shores of the Bay of Biscay, by planting pine-trees.

Signs are not wanting that in portions of the Kaipara district the Natives are realising the necessity of utilising their lands in a proper manner. They have not been an idle people, but their energy, such as it was, has been expended in other directions, gum-digging, bush-felling, and other employment in connection with the timber industry of the district. The period from 1873 to 1899 or thereabout was marked by great activity in the kauri-gum and kauri-timber industry. At the same time the Maoris of the four counties under review derived large sums of money from the sale of lands. We estimate the area sold between 1873 and 1900 at 380,000 acres, and the amount disbursed among the vendors at £40,000. About ten years ago the kauri-gum began to give out, while the available supply of kauri timber rapidly dwindled. Meanwhile the industry had attracted Natives from other districts to northern Kaipara. These either received grants of land from the resident Natives or purchased land from Europeans or the Crown. In Hobson County there are many Natives with very little land, who may be termed almost landless. It is alleged that since 1900 the Natives have turned their attention more to farming. A few Natives in each county are dairying and sheep-farming; one Native near Helensville is dairying on a large scale, and is anxious to secure more land for his cows and calves. The time seems opportune in the Kaipara district for fostering and directing these attempts to lead a more industrial life; there is need for the proper adjustment of titles to secure to the more industrious the fruit of their efforts, and to the State, or other lending body, a sufficient guarantee of title; above all, there is need for proper instruction and direction, that the energy hitherto used productively under European management and the spur of an assured wage may be diverted to the more difficult task of cultivating land with the incentive of a hard-won and long-deferred prosperity.

Our recommendations in respect of the lands in these counties are as follows :—

- (1.) That the lands shown under subheading B of each schedule be reserved for Maori occupation under Part II of “The Native Land Settlement Act, 1907.”
- (2.) That the lands shown under subheading C of each schedule as available for general settlement, except where already vested in the