

definite information, we scheduled these among the lands leased or under negotiation for lease. In fact, there is an important Maori sheep-farming community in the Wairarapa district, towards the coast, as will be seen from the sheep returns for the year 1907. These show that up to April of that year there were twenty-three registered Maori flocks, numbering nearly 36,656 sheep (one large flock being owned by a leading Maori, Iraia te Whaiti, in partnership with a European).

The demand for lands for closer settlement has in the Wairarapa drawn attention to the position of Native lands now under lease to Europeans, wherever an attempt has been made to obtain renewals of leases before their current terms have expired. We have already dealt with this phase of the question in our report, dated the 19th instant, on lands in the Hawke's Bay District.

WAITUTUMA BLOCKS.

These consist of the following blocks:—

							A.	R.	P.
Waitutuma	...	...	...	...	...	...	4,800	0	0
"	1A	...	...	...	...	...	17,800	0	0
"	1B	...	...	...	...	...	200	0	0
Total	...	...	...	...	...	...	22,800	0	0

There are forty owners of Waitutuma, whose relative interests or shares vary from 29 to 600 acres. There are thirty-eight owners of No. 1A, and their shares range from 400 to 1,200 acres. The owners of this block have been incorporated by order of the Native Land Court, but, owing to non-compliance with the regulations, no committee has been lawfully elected, and cannot now be elected unless the regulations are amended or Parliament intervenes to validate the election. Waitutuma No. 1B is owned by eight Natives.

The owners of these blocks appeared before us in Wellington on the 26th September last, and, with the exception of a few owners having large interests in No. 1A, they asked that their shares be sold by public auction to the highest bidder. We have since that sitting received written applications from other owners asking for the sale of their interests by public auction.

We are of opinion that an opportunity should be afforded the Native Land Court of partitioning the interests of these owners who do not wish to sell. They are not many, but the interests are extensive, and belong to Natives (principally Iraia te Whaiti) who have shown themselves capable of undertaking pastoral pursuits on a large scale. The Ikaroa Maori Land Board should be empowered to sell the balance in suitable areas by public auction.

We understand that the owners would have been willing to sell to the Crown if they were assured of obtaining market value. The latest Government valuation gives the valuation of these blocks as follows: 3,468 acres at 17s. 6d. an acre, and balance at 7s. 6d. an acre. The owners allege they are fortified with public local opinion in assessing the value at a much higher figure.

Now, by section 11 of "The Native Land Settlement Act, 1907," the land if vested in the Board must be divided for settlement purposes into one-half for freehold and one-half leasehold, unless, in terms of section 17 of "The Maori Land Laws Amendment Act, 1908," an Order in Council were issued authorising the whole of these blocks to be sold (after cutting out the interests of non-sellers). In such case the Board would be compelled to make up an equal area of leasehold in other parts of the Ikaroa Maori Land District, so as to conform to section 11 of the Act of 1907 as amended by section 17 of the Act of 1908.

We recommend therefore—

- (1.) That a sitting of the Court be held to partition the interests as between the proposing sellers and non-sellers.
- (2.) That the portions awarded to sellers be vested in the Ikaroa Maori Land Board under section 4 of "The Native Land Settlement Act, 1907."
- (3.) That an Order in Council be issued in terms of section 11 of the said Act as amended by section 17 of "The Maori Land Laws Amendment Act, 1908," authorising the sale of the whole of the lands so vested.