

our own experience in regard to dealings with Native matters, we are of opinion that some drastic change in procedure is necessary if the utilization of the land is to be secured.

From a return furnished by the District Land Registrar at Invercargill we find that out of 270 certificates of title prepared in his office only nine have so far been uplifted by the owners.

*The Regulations.*—The regulations under the South Island Landless Natives Act, 1906, published in the *New Zealand Gazette* on the 4th March, 1909, have been found in operation to be too cumbersome and practically unworkable.

In many cases the owners of a section are widely scattered, some being in Australia and even as far away as America, while in other cases the owners have died and no successors have been appointed; so that the expense and uncertainty in procuring signatures to a lease have prevented anything being done with the land. If a simple method of procedure analogous to that of dealing with Crown sections were adopted there is every probability that large areas would be taken up and settled, and the Native owners would derive the benefit of the rents accruing therefrom.

We would therefore recommend that legislation be enacted vesting all landless Native reserves for which the titles have not yet been uplifted in the Commissioner of Crown Lands for the district in which such reserves are situated, in trust for the Native owners; that the said Commissioner should have the reserves opened for settlement in suitable-sized sections, and submitted to ballot in the same manner as Crown lands are dealt with, but with the proviso that Native owners who wish to settle on their lands should have absolute preference before the general public are admitted to the ballot.

We recommend that the provisions of section 335 of the Native Land Act, 1909, be extended so that individual Natives who are occupying their own sections should be enabled to borrow money from a State Loan Department, or from any person or body corporate, for the purpose of improving their land.

Provision should be made for making regulations for administration expenses, &c.

There is also the question of roading to be gone into. We would suggest that the present unimproved value of the reserves be carefully ascertained; that the lands be then loaded under the same system as the Loans to Local Bodies Act; and that in fixing the upset rentals of the sections they be based on such a scale as to pay interest on the land valuation, plus interest and sinking fund on the loan expenditure.

In regard to sections which contain timber of commercial value, we are of opinion that before they are thrown open for permanent settlement the Commissioner should dispose of the timber in the same manner as provided for in the regulations for the sale of Crown timber, and that the royalties, less 5 per cent. for administrative expenses, should be paid over to the Native owners.

The landless-Native blocks are in an anomalous position. The land is not Native land within the meaning of the Native Land Act, 1909, and since the repeal of the South Island Landless Natives Act, 1906, the Native Land Court has no jurisdiction to partition or effect exchanges; and, as a large proportion of the owners are Europeans according to the Act of 1909, the Court has no power to appoint successors or trustees. It is therefore desirable that jurisdiction be conferred on the Native Land Court with respect to these lands similar to that given in the Native Land Act, 1909, and its amendments, with the same right of appeal to the Native Appellate Court.

In conclusion, we are pleased to state that we received every assistance from the various Government Departments and from private individuals on matters relating to our inquiry, and also to state that there has been complete unanimity between your Commissioners in regard to the conclusions and recommendations in this report.

In witness whereof we have hereunto set our hands and seals, this thirty-first day of August, in the year one thousand nine hundred and fourteen.

M. GILFEDDER, Chairman.

H. D. M. HASZARD, Member.