

under the proposed legislation. In such cases it is advisable that the matters in dispute shall be referred to the Chief Judge of the Native Land Court, whose decision shall be final.

The orders made in pursuance of the scheme shall be signed by the special officers and countersigned by the Chief Judge of the Native Land Court, who shall affix the seal of the Court thereto. Such orders shall operate as vesting-orders of the Native Land Court, and be registrable as such.

An order vesting title under the Act shall not be subject to appeal, but it is advisable to have powers of amendment such as were provided by section 39 of the Native Land Court Act, 1894.

3. *Crown Awards*.—These are set forth in the First Schedule. Where any block is completely awarded to the Crown the Act declares it to be Crown land. Where the rights between Crown and consolidated non-sellers require to be readjusted the Crown will derive its title from a vesting-order made under the Act.

In addition to any area to which the Crown is now entitled by purchase from the former Native owners, the Crown is entitled to a contribution towards the cost of arterial roads (up to £20,000 worth of land distributed over the whole of the Urewera country) and to take in land the approximate cost of the survey of the Native sections. These are deductible from the areas of the Native sections, and their extent and location is to be determined by the special officers.

The obligation is on the Crown to survey the Native sections in accordance with the direction of the special officers, and to reimburse itself for the cost of same in land.

4. *Alienation*.—A considerable period must elapse between the passing of the proposed legislation and the issue of the new titles thereafter for the Native sections. The existing Urewera Acts restrict all private alienations. Only the Crown is permitted to deal with Urewera lands either by sale or lease. It is clear that the scheme must be carried out to completion before any alienations are permitted, and we recommend that until the title to any Native section is completed by the making of an order and the endorsement thereon of a proper plan no alienation shall be permitted either to private persons or to the Crown. As regards the Crown, however, cases may arise where a sale to the Crown is desirable in order to adjust a difficulty, and in that case the purchase can take place on the recommendation of the special officers. When the titles are completed the general law relating to Native lands shall apply.

5. *Rates*.—The same provisions shall apply to local rates. No Native section shall be liable for rates until, say, a period of one year after the completion of the title thereto, and then only by notification under the hand of the Native Minister. It would not be fair to make these lands rateable until the roading scheme, to the cost of which they are contributing, is carried out.

6. Special provisions are required for those blocks which, though within the Urewera Native District, are not included in the consolidation scheme—namely, Ruatoki 1, 2, and 3, Whaitiripapa, Tapatahi, Manuoha, and Paharakeke. It was not possible to bring them into the present scheme, but it may be possible to deal with them, or some of them, partially before the details of the scheme can be carried out, and authority should be given for the purpose. In any case the restrictions against alienation should be applied to them as well as to the lands now included in the scheme.

7. *Waikaremoana Block and the Urewera Reserves*.—The former is already within the Urewera Native District Reserve, but the latter are not. They were, in fact, Crown lands granted as reserves to the Ureweras in the early days. Two of the reserves, Whareama and Ngaputahi, become Crown land by virtue of the scheme, the other two remain to the consolidated owners. Waikaremoana Block becomes Crown land by virtue of the scheme (a) by exchange as to Native interests consolidated to the north, (b) by agreement to sell as to Native interests owned by Natives living to the south of the lake and at Wairoa. The consideration for sale in the latter case is stated in the scheme, and the authority of Parliament is required for the necessary finance.

8. Authority is required for the grant of Crown lands to Natives in accordance with the scheme out of Whirinaki Block and Hereheretau B 2. These will become Native lands subject to the jurisdiction of the Native Land Court.

General Remarks.

We may say that the course decided upon by the Government in the case of the Urewera lands was probably the best that could have been adopted under the circumstances—namely, the carrying-out of negotiations in an informal way, unhampered by legislative and other restrictions—for the settlement of every question affecting this huge territory. The ordinary machinery of the Courts would have been at a serious disadvantage. A Court, acting judicially under statute, could not have conducted negotiations such as resulted in the acquisition of the Waikaremoana forest area, or the settlement of the Te Whaiti Blocks, where the Crown's objective was the large area of valuable milling-timber. Its own rules would have caused delays and adjournments at a time when the fullest advantage had to be taken of the complete representation of all non-sellers' interests at one place.

The Urewera consolidation scheme, if approved and completed, will effect a great saving to the country, especially to the Native Department, and will enable the Lands Department and those Departments associated with it in the settlement of Crown lands to commence operations on a comprehensive scale without any further delay. The following would be some of the chief results of the scheme:—

- (a.) A complete stock-taking of the ownership of lands in the Urewera country, which comprises 656,000 acres. That ownership is brought up to date in all details. Instead of being the most backward, they will be as far advanced as the best Native titles in any part of the Dominion.
- (b.) The work of the Native Land Court will in the future be reduced to making partitions among members of a family, which in practice would mean giving effect to family arrangements, and carrying on the successions to deceased owners.