

The Committee may from time to time associate with itself one or more persons as may be expedient to advise and assist the Committee, but the concurrence of any such person in the report of the Committee shall not be necessary.

And it is desired that, using all diligence, but not later than six calendar months from the date hereof, the Committee do report to me its opinion resulting from the said inquiry in respect of the matters hereby referred to it, together with such suggestions and recommendations it may make as a remedy for all or any of the matters aforesaid which in its opinion require to be remedied, and the manner in which the same should be carried into effect.

The Committee is directed that it shall not at any time without the consent of a Minister of the Crown publish or otherwise disclose the contents or purport of any report so made or to be made by it.

Dated at Wellington, the 18th day of April, 1933.

GEO. W. FORBES, Prime Minister.

Wellington, 29th September, 1933.

To the Right Honourable G. W. Forbes, P.C., Prime Minister, Wellington.

DEAR SIR,—

Acting under your warrant dated 18th April, 1933, we held meetings and heard evidence and statements from local authority and Native representatives at Wairoa, Gisborne, Tolaga Bay, Te Puia, Ruatoria, Te Araroa, Opotiki, Whakatane, Tauranga, Rotorua, Te Aroha, Paeroa, Thames, Whangarei, Kawakawa, Kaeo, Kaitaia, Rawene, Dargaville, Ruawai, Warkworth, Auckland, Ngaurawahia, Hamilton, Te Awamutu, Te Kuiti, Taumarunui, Waitara, Hawera, Wanganui, and Levin. In addition we communicated with the other interested North Island local authorities. We also visited and inspected a number of Native settlements and development schemes, taking statements of Native representatives. From a close examination of figures and balance-sheets placed before us by various local authorities, it is quite apparent that by reason of non-payment of Native rates, together with the non-payment of rates on certain Crown controlled lands occupied by Europeans, several local authorities, particularly within the Auckland Province, are finding it extremely difficult to carry on; and without doubt in that province this is tending to strengthen a widespread demand that rural lands be entirely derated for roading and hospital requirements.

(1) UNOCCUPIED NATIVE LANDS.

As a result of our investigation and observation we are satisfied that in a number of counties there are considerable areas of Native land with no rateable value. Section 104 of the Rating Act, 1925, enables the removal of such areas from valuation rolls by the Governor-General in Council exempting them from rateability, but so far very little appears to have been done in that direction. We are of the opinion that the Native Department, acting in conjunction with the Valuation Department and the local authorities should make a much wider use of the section of the Rating Act referred to, and we recommend accordingly.

(2) ROAD REQUIREMENTS OF NATIVE OCCUPIED OR OCCUPIABLE LANDS.

From the inquiries we have made and on the candid admission of many Natives themselves, we are satisfied that the great bulk of Native occupied or occupiable land is as well served by roads and bridges as the land of Europeans who are paying rates in the same localities. Many Native holdings on which in recent years practically no rates have been paid have highways running through or fronting them, and it is manifestly unfair that European ratepayers alone should be compelled to pay the rates required for the construction and maintenance of such roads. The construction of access roads to individual holdings (whether Native or European) has always been recognized as a responsibility of the land served or of the Crown, or of both in some proportion. Many of the individual Native holdings or titles are of so small an area as to be incapable of supporting a family, and the provision of actual road access to such is an economic impossibility. Very small blocks (particularly on the hilly country of what is known as the East Coast or Poverty Bay District) if farmed by Natives, must be done on community or family lines, and even then the construction of purely access roads thereto must be a charge on the land or a responsibility of the Crown. After full and careful consideration we find no reasonable ground for the Natives refusing to pay rates because of the failure of local authorities to provide road access to each individual holding, and we report accordingly.

(3) NATIVE LAND DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES.

We visited and inspected several development schemes controlled by the Native Department, and were much impressed by the progress made in most of the schemes. We are of the opinion that similar schemes ought to be brought into operation, with advantage both to the country generally and the Natives themselves, and we congratulate the Native Department on the progress already made. Our attention, however, was drawn to the fact that no rates were being paid on the lands included in these development schemes, although much use was being made of the roads and other facilities already provided or maintained by local authorities. Further, that there was a tendency to treat these development lands as if they were lands owned by the Crown, and thus not liable for payment of rates. This, apart from being unfair to local authorities, is not helping to educate Natives in one