

1877.
NEW ZEALAND.

LAND PURCHASES IN POVERTY BAY.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

I.—REPORT FROM MR. J. A. WILSON, LAND PURCHASE OFFICER, POVERTY BAY, AND CORRESPONDENCE RELATING THERETO.

No. 1.

Mr. J. A. WILSON to the Hon. the NATIVE MINISTER.

SIR,—

Land Purchase Office, Gisborne, 6th June, 1876.

I have the honor to report, as Land Purchase Officer for the East Coast and Bay of Plenty District, that a number of transactions have been effected during the past year, and that the following business has been done:—

I.—Former Negotiations completed.

I regret that under this head there should be nothing to record. This arises from no fault or shortcoming in my department. The lands have been negotiated, deposits paid, agreements signed, their surveys have been executed, and applications in writing have been made by the Natives to the Native Land Court (in too many cases repeatedly) to have their claims heard. Moreover, on the 25th October last, I requested that the Native Land Court might be moved to commence to take cases in the middle of February last in which the Land Purchase Department is interested in this district, “as my plans would then be ripe for passing twenty-three blocks through the Court containing 270,000 acres.” Yet notwithstanding this I regret to state that, excepting certain lands to be hereafter mentioned (where private parties have interfered to obstruct my operations, and where the unprecedented proceedings of the Judge and District Officer have militated seriously against them) not a single block has passed the Court, nor has a case been called. This statement applies equally to all blocks included in former negotiations and in negotiations entered into during the current year.

I should say that at my request the Natives have applied to the Court to have their claims to 259,670 acres investigated. The whole of the said lands have been negotiated and surveyed at the expense of Government, while the tracings of the plans of 214,170 acres of them are in my office. The balance of their area (45,500 acres) is estimated, because, although the surveys are finished upon the ground, the plans have not yet been sent in. Of these lands none have been heard. The Native Land Court has, however, gazetted for hearing, 68,588 acres; not yet gazetted, 191,082 acres; total, 259,670 acres.

II.—Fresh Blocks purchased.

During the year under report I have purchased fifteen new blocks, containing a total of 101,037 acres, at an average price of 1s. 10d. per acre. The surveys of all these blocks except three are completed. The blocks are scattered throughout the district, are of good average quality, and may be considered to be desirable acquisitions.

III.—Leased Lands purchased.

Under this head, I have to report that 142,709 acres of leased lands have been converted by purchase during the past year. They have been bought at an average cost of 1s. 8½d. per acre, and 68,652 acres, having passed the Native Land Court in previous years, are now held by Crown title.

IV.—Fresh Blocks leased.

No fresh leases have been made, because I have found myself able to purchase, and have therefore invariably refused to lease.

V.—Moneys paid.

From the foregoing, it appears that the purchases during the past year are 243,746 acres. The payments made on these are—advances on lands not yet heard by the Court, £3,291; payments made upon Crown title, £4,175 12s. 10d.; total payments on purchase, £7,466 12s. 10d.; advances on former leases, £43; total, £7,509 12s. 10d.