

LEGISLATION

94. The only legislation dealing with Maori affairs during 1949-50 was the Maori Purposes Bill, 1949, principally comprising minor amendments to existing law and matters of local interest. An important provision, however, dealt with the rehabilitation of Maori ex-servicemen who have been placed on land under the control of the Board of Maori Affairs.

95. These ex-servicemen were given the same right as had previously been granted to other ex-servicemen to apply for a review of liabilities not earlier than three years, and not later than six years, after the date upon which the land was leased to them or sold under an agreement for sale and purchase. Provision is made for the reduction of rent or of mortgage moneys in cases where it is established that the original rent or purchase price was too high.

96. The Act also constituted an advisory Council to consult with and assist the East Coast Commissioner in the administration of the East Coast Maori Trust lands. This will enable the beneficial owners to have a voice in the control of their lands and also to gain experience in administration preparatory to the eventual dissolution of the Trust.

MAORI CLAIMS

97. Section 29 of the Maori Purposes Act, 1949, provided for the payment of £20,000 in settlement of claims arising out of the cession of the Kauhoroa Block to the Crown at the time of the Maori wars on the East Coast. The land, which is in the Wairoa district, was ceded to the Crown in 1867 by virtue of an agreement under which the Crown agreed to withdraw its claim to the lands of rebellious Maoris in the district in consideration of the cession of the Kauhoroa Block. A later agreement provided that the area over which the Crown had released its claims was to be awarded to loyal Maoris. This was not done, however, the land being awarded without distinction to loyalists and rebels alike. A Royal Commission of 1927 found that the loyalist section were entitled to compensation.

98. Three Royal Commissions were set up during the past year to inquire into and report upon various Maori claims. Sir Harold Johnston, K.C., was appointed a Commission to investigate a claim by Wanganui Maoris to the bed of the Wanganui River. The Right Hon. Sir Michael Myers, P.C., G.C.M.G., H. M. Christie, Esq., and Richard Ormsby, Esq., were appointed a Commission to inquire into the question of compensation for improvements affected by lessees of Maori lands vested in Maori Land Boards, and the same gentlemen were appointed a Commission to investigate several other matters which had been the subject of petitions to Parliament.

99. These claims comprised the following matters :—

- (1) The payment by the Aotea District Maori Land Board of a sum of £25,000 to the Egmont Box Co., Ltd., on the surrender of timber-cutting rights over West Taupo lands vested in the Board.
- (2) Claims arising out of the purchase of the Mohaka Block by the Crown.
- (3) Claims as between different groups of Maoris to the Tarawera and Tatarakainga Blocks, between Napier and Taupo.
- (4) Claims arising out of the purchase of the Opouturi Block in North Auckland.

100. The death of Sir Michael Myers after his appointment as Chairman of two of these Royal Commissions is recorded with deep regret. His place has been filled by the appointment of D. J. Dalglish, Esq., Deputy Judge of the Arbitration Court.