

The book-keeping and accounting of each Board have increased considerably, owing to the number of small accounts. The transactions of the various Boards are shown in the balance-sheets attached hereto. The total turnover of the several Boards is as under:—

	£	s.	d.
Ikaroa	132,017	6	7
Waikato-Maniapoto	116,426	6	4
Tokerau	50,609	7	10
Aotea	101,347	9	4
Tairāwhiti	33,900	16	0
Waiariki	79,706	4	4

which represents a total amount of £514,007 10s. 5d.; while the amounts received by way of fees, rents, and purchase-money are—

	£	s.	d.
Ikaroa	52,620	7	2
Waikato-Maniapoto	54,797	19	5
Tokerau	22,330	8	10
Aotea	41,539	4	5
Tairāwhiti	19,001	17	11
Waiariki	22,921	0	8

showing a total of £213,240 18s. 5d. This amount is considerably less than last year, owing mainly no doubt to the restricted transfers by way of sale, which to a large extent is owing to the stringency of financial operations, and also to the want of road access to Native blocks, due to the survey and roading schemes not being able to get ahead of past settlement.

Table B herewith sets out in detail the operations of the Boards, together with their statements of receipts and disbursements, which total a sum of £514,007 10s. 5d. The table as prepared is in continuation of that contained in my report of last year. The revenue derived through Maori Land Boards from fees payable under section 81, for the financial period ended 31st March last, amounted to £4,963 9s. 6d., and other revenue by commission on sales, &c., to £2,990 3s. 7d., making a total of £7,954 13s. 1d. The expenditure for the year was £5,356 1s. 6d. I would suggest that the commission received should be paid—similar to fees under section 81—into the Consolidated Fund.

Whilst commenting hereon, I might suggest that action be taken to obtain permanent offices for the working of the Native Land Court and Maori Land Boards, more especially at Auckland, Gisborne, and Rotorua, as the offices now in use are not conducive to satisfactory working. If the two branches were in direct touch with each other, the carrying-out of their duties would be greatly facilitated.

NATIVE LAND PURCHASE.

The Native Land Purchase Board held seven meetings during the year. Numerous offers were received and considered by the Board. The actual purchases totalled an area of 31,035 acres, and negotiations are pending affecting a number of blocks.

Table C shows in detail the operations of the Native Land Purchase Board. In connection with the purchase of Native land by the Crown under Part XVIII of the Native Land Act, 1909, I would like to make some general remarks. It is reported that persons acting as proxies have attended meetings solely for the purpose of endeavouring to defeat a sale to the Crown. Although no actual proof can be brought to bear, it is assumed that in some cases a proxy represents the lessee of the land or would-be purchaser or speculator, besides acting for the Native owners, and his knowledge and ability are brought to bear by the use of arguments that will appeal to the Natives' imagination, and so defeat the motion before the meeting.

I am of the opinion that it would be preferable for the Board to decide, under the provisions of Rule 49 of the regulations, that the appointment of proxies be limited to other owners of the block, so that outsiders could take no part in the meeting.

It is further desirable, in the larger blocks, where a number of owners are concerned, and a motion to sell has been defeated by a not fully representative meeting, that provision should exist for the Crown to acquire individual interests.

In respect of individual negotiations, where land is held by ten owners or less, and same has been prohibited under section 363 of the Native Land Act, 1909, private individuals, land agents, and others make it their business to ascertain the owners and interview them with the object of being appointed the Natives' agents to negotiate the sale to the Crown.

I would state that there is no need for the introduction of a third party in the matter at all, except where the vendor actually requires independent advice. All negotiations for the purchase of Native land have to be carried out in accordance with the Act, and the price is to be not less than the valuation ascertained by certificate from the Valuer-General; therefore all that is necessary is for the Natives to approach the President of the District Maori Land Board, or the Land Purchase Department direct, when the matter would be explained to them, and if they were agreeable to sell at the Government valuation they could execute a transfer and receive the purchase-money.