

1914.
NEW ZEALAND.

NATIVE LAND COURTS AND MAORI LAND BOARDS

(REPORT FROM THE UNDER-SECRETARY, NATIVE DEPARTMENT, ON THE WORKING OF)
FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31st MARCH, 1914.

Laid on the Table of the House of Representatives by Leave.

The Hon. the Native Minister.

Native Department, Wellington, 23rd June, 1914.

I HAVE the honour to append hereunder a report upon the work of the various branches affecting Native lands:—

NATIVE LAND COURT.

The Native Land Court has been well employed during the year (excepting for period of smallpox epidemic). During the period 121 sittings were gazetted, and 24,189 cases were scheduled for hearing; the Court dealt with 82 original investigations, affecting an area of 29,271 acres, hitherto unclothed with title, and made 1,019 partition orders, affecting 368,175 acres. Numerous other orders were made, all affecting titles to land. Eighteen sittings of the Native Appellate Court were notified, and the number of cases scheduled totalled 264. In addition to the foregoing, the following alienations were approved and confirmed by the Court in the South Island: 27 leases, totalling 3,058 acres, and 21 transfers, totalling 2,835 acres.

The year's revenue derived per medium of Court fees, &c., payable to, received, and outstanding for the year ended 31st March, 1914, amounts to £5,584, a slight decrease on the previous period.

As mentioned in my report for 1912, activity in settling old Native titles for the purposes of alienation is being maintained, the sum of £747 1s. 10d. being collected for fees due on old orders. By no stretch of imagination can it be said that fees which are charged by the Courts and noted on the orders are irrecoverable. The said fees must be paid before the titles can go forward for registration.

Table A attached hereto sets out in detail the operations of the Court.

MAORI LAND BOARDS.

The Boards have also been fully occupied with ordinary work. The area of land administered by the Boards totals 977,643 acres, and the following alienations have taken place: 1,426 leases have been issued, of a total area of 381,293 acres, and 122 transfers, comprising 94,871 acres, of which 37 leases, aggregating 13,815 acres, and 40 transfers, totalling 30,912 acres, were approved and confirmed during the year. This leaves 501,479 acres still in the hands of the Boards for settlement; but the Boards are unable to place the lands on the market until surveys have been made. Requisitions have gone forward, but apparently there is a dearth of surveyors, otherwise I am unable to account for the fact that the Boards are unable to obtain titles. The question of surveys is dealt with later.

In addition to vested and administered lands, the Boards have during the period approved of 457 leases, totalling 119,709 acres, and confirmed 1,325 transfers, totalling 181,773 acres, of Native freehold lands. These figures do not compare favourably with the figures of former periods, and may be accounted for to some extent by the fact that the smallpox epidemic interfered with negotiations as between Europeans and Natives.

Owing to the numerous accounts, the book-keeping and accounting of each Board is a very important item, and requires careful attention because of the numbers of owners and variation of shares in each account. The total turnover of the Boards amounts to the sum of £613,061 9s., while the actual cash received by the Boards totalled the sum of £296,643 8s. 11d., an increase of £83,401 over the last period.