

1915.

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, 1915.*Laid on the Table of the House of Representatives by Leave.*

ANNUAL REPORT.

The Hon. the Native Minister.

Native Department, Wellington, 10th June, 1915.

I HAVE the honour to append herewith a report on the work of the various branches dealing with Native land.

Native Land Court.

The Native Land Court has been fully employed during the year. For the period 138 sittings were gazetted, and 22,281 cases were scheduled for hearing. In addition to the ordinary Court sitting in each district two separate Courts have been sitting in the Tairāwhiti and Aotea Districts, dealing with original investigations relating to customary lands. Investigations affecting an area of 40,536 acres have been considered; and with reference to Native freehold land 2,083 partition orders, affecting 435,313 acres, have been made. A number of other orders affecting titles to Native lands have also been dealt with. There have been eleven sittings of the Native Appellate Court, the total number of cases scheduled being 120. In addition to the business mentioned alienations approved and confirmed by the Court in the South Island as to the 7th November last consisted of twelve leases comprising 4,438 acres and 10 perches, and twelve transfers comprising 197 acres 1 rood 13 perches.

The year's revenue received by way of Court fees, &c., and including outstandings of fees for the current year, totalled a sum of £6,049 3s. 6d., as against £5,584 in the previous period. In connection with fees due on old Native Land Court orders, the sum of £590 13s. 5d. has been collected during the past year. Of this amount a portion is for orders made as far back as Chief Judges Fenton and MacDonald's time.

Table A attached hereto sets out the operations of the Court for the year ending 31st March, 1915.

Maori Land Boards.

The Boards have been fully occupied with the usual routine work in connection with land-alienation. The area of land administered by the Boards totals 967,357 acres, after allowing for some sixteen blocks, comprising about 5,246 acres, being re-vested in the Native owners during the year. Alienations during the year consisted of fifty leases, covering a total area of 9,024 acres 3 roods 7 perches, and four transfers, totalling 4,704 acres 3 roods. There have been practically no lands placed on the market during the year, owing to the surveys not having been completed. It is understood that surveys of some of the blocks are now in order, which will allow of the land being placed on the market at an early date.

At the present time there is in the Auckland District open for selection an area of 11,197 acres on leasehold and 12,895 acres on freehold tenure; while in the Aotea District the Whare-toto blocks, comprising 49,104 acres, are open for lease.

Outside of vested and administered lands, the Boards have also during the year approved of 366 leases, comprising 77,594 acres 3 roods 39 perches; and confirmed 1,161 transfers, comprising 161,020 acres 1 rood 31 perches of freehold land. These figures will, no doubt, show a considerable reduction when compared with previous returns, and may be accounted for mainly by the unsettled state of finance, and also by the fact that large areas of Native lands are still outside the range of existing settlement owing to want of road access.

During the year eleven lessees of the Te Kuiti and Otorohanga Native Townships have acquired the freehold of their sections.