

The Commissioners completed their investigations towards the end of 1902, and meantime made an interim report (Parliamentary Paper G.-6, 1902). Their complete orders, defining the owners of all hapu blocks and their shares, were printed and presented to Parliament as Paper G.-6, 1903. This may be termed the first stage of the ascertainment of titles. It was open to any aggrieved party to appeal to the Native Minister, who could under the 1896 Act direct an expert inquiry into the appeals and dispose of them on their report. There were 173 appeals (published in *New Zealand Gazette* dated the 15th November, 1906). These were dealt with by Commissioners between 1906 and March, 1907. Their report is printed as Parliamentary Paper G.-4, 1907, which also contains the final orders under the hand of the Native Minister dated the 30th August, 1907. These orders form the basis of the land-titles in the Urewera district.

Parliament in the same year made the Urewera Native Reserve subject to the Mining Act, and empowered the Governor to make regulations to carry out a promise of the late Mr. Seddon to the Ureweras in regard to prospecting and mining for gold. (The Maori Land Claims Adjustment and Laws Amendment Act, 1907, sections 7 and 8.) It also empowered the Native Land Court to investigate the title of one block (Pukepohatu) which the second Commission (on appeals) found not to have been investigated by the original Commission.

It will be noted that up to 1907 the Urewera lands had been dealt with apart, that the Native Land Court had no jurisdiction, and the ordinary rules relating to the issue and registration of titles, surveys, and alienation did not apply. No private person could deal with any Urewera land, and it is doubtful whether the Crown could purchase except from the General Committee, which could not be appointed until the titles were finally ascertained in 1907. Thus the period from 1896 to 1907 was wholly occupied with the litigation relating to the thirty-four tribal blocks into which the territory was divided, involving an area of 650,000 acres. The titles could not be issued because the sketch-plans on which the investigations were based were magnetic surveys. In 1908 the Native Land Commission (Stout-Ngata), in G.-1A, 1908, reported: "To complete the titles so far as investigations have proceeded proper surveys are required. The titles, however, are far enough advanced to allow of the Native Land Court exercising jurisdiction in partition, succession, and other cases"; and recommended that the other steps contemplated in the principal Act of 1896—namely, the appointment of Local (Block) Committees and the election of a General Committee—be carried out. The Ureweras had offered to the Native Land Commission an area of 28,000 acres, portions of ten different blocks, to be dealt with for settlement by way of lease. The Maori Land Laws Amendment Act, 1908, sections 20 to 22, gave effect to some of the Native Land Commission's recommendations. In March, 1909, the General Committee was constituted. In 1909 the Urewera District Native Reserve Amendment Act was passed. It provided for the conversion of the Urewera title orders into freehold orders under the Native Land Act, 1909, and registrable as such; extended the jurisdiction of the Native Land Court in all matters (the consent of the Governor in Council being required to partition and exchange) to Urewera lands, and emphasized the provision that no Urewera land could be purchased by the Crown otherwise than from the General Committee in pursuance of the principal Act. The rules (*New Zealand Gazette*, 8th September, 1910) provided that this consent should be given by resolution of the committee under its seal.

During 1908, 1909, and 1910 numerous attempts were made by the Ureweras, by petition and otherwise, to reopen some of their titles. The right of appeal was conceded by legislation in 1910 (the Urewera District Native Reserve Amendment Act), and some appeals were dealt with by the Native Appellate Court. But the amendments to the titles were not serious.

In the meantime a large section of the Ureweras, led by Rua Kenana, then at the height of his influence, demanded that some of the lands should be sold to the Crown. This led in the winter of 1910 to an arrangement with the General Committee whereby lands in the Waimana or Tauranga basin, between Waimana and Maungapohatu, were authorized to be purchased by the Crown. A special valuation was made by an officer of the Lands and Survey Department, who reported favourably on the Waimana Valley lands, and the Government authorized the Lands Department to conduct the purchases in seven blocks, approved by the General Committee. By March, 1912, the area acquired, all in the Waimana basin, was 40,795 acres, at a cost of £31,353 6s. The negotiations were made difficult by the constant disputes as to titles, by the necessity of conforming to the wishes of the General Committee, and the doubt as to the legality of the course pursued in the purchases by the Crown. The procedure was first to obtain the written consent of the individual owner to the sale of his share, a payment being made to him on the assessed value of his interest. It was contemplated that when a sufficient area was acquired the Crown would define by partition the interests of those who had sold, and the General Committee would then affirm the sale of that portion by resolution and thus comply with the law.

Political changes in 1912 were partly responsible for the temporary cessation of the purchases. It appeared to be necessary to push the Urewera titles to completion by undertaking proper surveys. It was said of the old magnetic surveys that "they were useless for title purposes, and in many cases impossible to redefine on the ground, present-day Natives being unacquainted with the location of the named places on the boundary-lines." It was clear that a re-establishment of the old surveys would be a costly proceeding. In the meantime the Ureweras everywhere were clamouring for a resumption of the purchases; private syndicates were alleged to be in treaty for the acquisition of timber-cutting rights. During 1915 officers of the Lands and Survey Department made a special valuation of the balance of the Urewera lands, and especially of the timber resources. Except in part of the Whaiti Block the latter were not extensive, were not in sufficient quantities or in locations suitable for milling purposes. The Native Land Purchase Board towards the end of 1914 decided to resume the purchases, and to purchase direct from individual owners without reference to the General Committee. The policy of Crown purchase from individual Native owners had been approved