

NATIVE LAND PURCHASE BOARD.

Native land purchased by the Crown amounted to 7,292 acres. The area proclaimed as Crown land was 12,510 acres. Since 1910, 1,439,429 acres of Native land have been acquired through the Native Land Purchase Board, at an aggregate expenditure of £3,424,257.

The estimated area of Native land still owned by Maoris in the North Island is as follows :—

	Acres.	Acres.
Estimated as at 31st March, 1928	..	4,083,057
Sales to Crown	7,292	
Sales to individuals	15,363	
		22,655
Total	..	4,060,402

GENERAL.

The various consolidating schemes have gone forward, but, as indicated in last year's report, the matter has to be approached with much care, and it will be some time before all the schemes in the various districts can be fully carried out. Sufficient progress has, however, been made to give the Maori owner of the soil a fresh incentive to industrial progress, and especially where the primary industries are concerned. A splendid illustration of the fruits of Maori perseverance under proper guidance is shown in the results of a Maori-owned factory which last season saw an output of 285 tons of high-grade butter. The Bay of Plenty Maoris have also a butter-factory of their own. There are various drawbacks which prevent that factory making greater strides, but it serves a very useful purpose in encouraging the Natives in habits of industry and thrift. In Taranaki there are many Maori suppliers, while in the far North during the 1927–28 season some 550 Maoris supplied butterfat valued at £53,000 to the local factories. Some people are apt to consider the Maori as one who is not accustomed to work, but returns recently published by the Government Statistician show that out of a population of some sixty-four thousand Maoris, including women and children, over twenty-two thousand of these were engaged in various labouring pursuits, at least half being in the primary industries. The great problem is how to find sufficient money to enable the Maori to usefully develop his own land and to reap an adequate return for his labour. The Maori Land Boards are doing what they can to give incentive to agricultural development, and it will be noted from the returns that the advances to Maoris have increased by £80,000, while certain areas of land have been acquired by the Boards for Native farming purposes.

During the year a forward move was made, as far as the Maori people are concerned, in bringing the Waikato people into line with their less conservative brothers. In the heart of what was known as the King-country, the inhabitants of which have to a certain extent held aloof from the march of progress, a meeting was held at which representatives of every other tribe in New Zealand were present, and questions dealing with industrial organization, Maori agricultural development, and other matters making for the physical, moral, and social welfare of the Maori were discussed from all angles. The Waikato people, having profited by the experience of other Maoris, are now anxious to turn their energies to the occupation and development of suitable areas of land for farming purposes. Delegations of Maori farmers having visited their brother Maoris in less favoured districts, have pointed out how lands can be profitably used, and have opened up for them a vista of future development and prosperity.

During the year an unfortunate epidemic of dysentery broke out, the principal sufferers being the Maori people. The Department joined with the Health Department in setting up a special organization which effectively dealt with the dysentery and its probable causes, and the epidemic has now abated. Precautions are, however, being taken with a view to prevent, if possible, a recurrence, and a general clean-up of the Maori pas within the area most affected is being carried out. The Maoris themselves are whole-heartedly seconding the efforts of the organization, having been brought to see that it was in their own interests to have their general living-conditions reviewed and improved.

One more Maori was declared a European, making a total of seventy Europeanized Natives.

Four licenses were issued to Native Interpreters.

R. N. JONES, Under-Secretary.