

CROWN PURCHASES OF NATIVE LAND.

Native land purchased by the Crown amounted to 136 acres. Since 1910, 1,543,472 acres of Native land have been acquired through the Board of Native Affairs, which has taken the place of the Native Land Purchase Board.

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

				Aces.	Aces.
Estimated as at 31st March, 1934	..	..	..	..	3,851,122
Sales to Crown	..	..	..	136	
Sales to individuals	..	..	..	22,675	
					22,811
					3,828,311

GENERAL.

During the year just ended consolidation of interests in Native land has been carried on in the Tokerau, Waikato-Maniapoto (King-country), Waiariki, and Tairāwhiti Districts. Considerable progress has been made in the assembly of data for the various schemes under preparation, and in some of the schemes grouping and location has been well advanced. However, progress is necessarily restricted by the scarcity of trained officers available for the work, and this applies especially to the field work of grouping the owners and locating their interests. If additional officers could be made available the work would advance more rapidly towards completion.

The Department has continued to undertake the conduct of Maori unemployment relief, and during the year afforded relief to 2,635 individuals. The sum paid to these unemployed men amounted to £49,917, or an average of £18 18s. 10d. per person. This activity is carried out for the most part by the Department's field officers in addition to their duties in supervising development operations and imposes a heavy strain on the personnel of the Department.

In order to strengthen the organization of the Department for the purpose of dealing with advances to Natives for the improvement and farming of their lands and for carrying out the development of Native lands or lands owned or occupied by Natives, the Board of Native Affairs Act was passed and became law on the 5th April, 1935.

This Act provided, *inter alia*, for the establishment of a Board of Native Affairs and for setting up District Committees, the Chairmen of which shall be the Judges of the respective Native Land Court districts. The District Committees are expected to secure an increased measure of co-operation between the Department, the Maori Land Boards, the field officers, and the Natives whose lands are being developed and settled.

The Maori Purposes Fund Act, which also became law on the 5th April, 1935, abolished the three separate Boards formerly known as the "Maori Purposes Fund Control Board," the "Board of Maori Ethnological Research," and the "Maori Arts and Crafts Board," and vested the powers and functions of these Boards in the Maori Purposes Fund Board, which replaced the three Boards. The change will make for greater co-ordination in promoting the objectives of the individual Boards besides effecting a saving in the administrative costs.

The Royal Commission appointed last year to inquire into the administration of Native Affairs completed its report on the 20th October, 1934. The report, which is very voluminous, in pointing out various weaknesses in the administration of the Maori Land Boards, the Native Trustee and the Native land development operations of the Department, made many recommendations for strengthening the organization and control of the Department's manifold activities.

The Board of Native Affairs Act and the Maori Purposes Fund Act mentioned above give effect to some of the Commission's recommendations, and further legislative provision will, it is expected, be made during the coming session to give effect to other of the Commission's recommendations for strengthening and improving the departmental machinery.

During the year the Department has given considerable attention to the question of the housing conditions of Natives in those areas where Maori population is considerable. The Departments of Health and Public Works have co-operated with the officers of this Department, and much help has been received from the various local bodies within whose territories investigations were made.

It is hoped that it will be possible, in the near future, to take steps which will improve the housing and social conditions of the Maori population, even if it should not be possible to provide a complete remedy.

Dealings in Native lands during the year show an increase both in the number of transactions recorded and the areas alienated. This would appear to indicate that financial conditions and prospects in the country are improving or at least that confidence is returning.

Crown purchases of Native lands were only 136 acres during the year, but negotiations have been in progress for some time for the purchase of a considerable area in the Hokonui area in Southland. The owners of the various blocks concerned have now accepted the Department's offers to purchase their interests, but the completion of the transactions is dependent upon their confirmation by the Native Land Court as required by law.

Mr. P. G. Pearce, who was appointed Under-Secretary and Native Trustee on the 28th November, 1933, was recalled to the Public Service Commissioner's office for special duty on the 30th April.

One license was issued to a Native Interpreter during the year, while three licenses were revoked.

Tables are appended giving the work of the Courts and Boards and Native Land Purchase operations for the year ended the 31st March, 1935.