

1876.
NEW ZEALAND.

STATEMENT RELATIVE TO LAND PURCHASES,
NORTH ISLAND.

Under Immigration and Public Works Acts of 1870 and 1873.

BY THE HON. THE NATIVE MINISTER, SIR D. McLEAN.

Mr. SPEAKER,—

In pursuance of the course adopted last year, I propose to lay before the House a statement of the land purchase operations of the Government under the Immigration and Public Works Acts for the year ended 30th June, 1876; but before doing so, I may be permitted to make a few general remarks for the information of honorable members.

It will be remembered that in the statement I had the honor to make last year, I took occasion to mention some of the obstacles which had to be contended with by the Government in the task of acquiring a landed estate for the North Island, not the least of which was the superior advantages held by the experienced agents of capitalists and speculators in buying up large tracts of country. I am happy to inform the House that during the past year the Government Agents have been less exposed to obstruction in carrying out to a satisfactory issue their arrangements with the Natives.

To the north of Auckland several valuable blocks of land have been purchased, some of which are well adapted for settlement. Some delay took place in completing these transactions, from the circumstance that the land could not be passed through the Native Land Court till proper surveys had been made. These having been accomplished, no difficulty was experienced in bringing negotiations to a successful issue; and of the one hundred and one transactions originally entered into, nearly the whole have been completed; 443,856 acres have been acquired at a cost (inclusive of expenses) of £43,895 1s. 8d., or 2s. per acre.

The value of many of these blocks was not really known till the country had been opened up by surveys; and it is reported by the surveyors and Europeans in the district who have inspected the land that they are eminently adapted for settlement. Appeals have on more than one occasion been made by the Natives to have these lands peopled by an English population, and they have readily disposed of some of the best of their lands to induce European settlement.

Viewing the large extent of country that has been from time to time acquired from the Natives in the North, and the representations that have been made by the District Officer, appointed under the Native Land Act of 1873, as to the quantity of land still in the possession of the Natives, it has become a question for consideration whether, after the present negotiations are completed, it would be right, regard being had to the wants of the Natives, for the Government to acquire any more land in that district.

Most of the lands to the north of Auckland in the possession of the Natives are, through the medium of the Native Land Court, held under Crown grant; and the cordial relations which exist between them and their European neighbours indicate that the time has arrived when the Ngapuhi and Karawa tribes may be considered as upon an equal footing with the Europeans.