

passed an Act under which Commissioners were appointed to inquire strictly into all the circumstances under which land was said to have been purchased by British subjects from the aboriginal natives of New Zealand. By a provision of this Act, 2,560 acres were fixed upon as the largest quantity that any individual could retain in virtue of cession from the Natives, and legal title could only be issued by the representative of the Crown; to obtain which, it would be necessary to prove that a reasonable consideration had been given to the Native proprietors.

The rate of sufficient payment was fixed as follows: Between the years 1815 and 1824, 6d. per acre; between 1825 and 1829, 6d. to 8d. per acre; between 1830 and 1834, 8d. to 1s. per acre; between 1835 and 1836, 1s. to 2s. per acre; between 1837 and 1838, 2s. to 4s. per acre; and in the year 1839, 4s. to 8s. per acre.

On the 9th June, 1841, an Ordinance was passed by the Legislative Council of New Zealand, at Auckland, to repeal the Act of 1840 passed on behalf of New Zealand by the Governor and Council of New South Wales, and to terminate any Commission issued under the authority of the said Act, New Zealand having, in the meantime, been made independent of New South Wales.

The new Ordinance enacted that: "All unappropriated lands within the Colony of New Zealand, subject, however, to the rightful and necessary occupation and use thereof by the original inhabitants of the said colony, are and remain Crown domain lands of Her Majesty, her heirs and successors, and that the sole and absolute right of pre-emption from the said aboriginal inhabitants vests in and can only be exercised by Her Majesty, her heirs and successors."

All titles to land, however obtained, "either mediately or immediately from chiefs or individuals of the aboriginal tribes," unless allowed by the Crown, were declared absolutely null and void. Under another clause the Governor was empowered to appoint Commissioners to hear, examine, and report on claims to grants of land in virtue of titles acquired from the Natives, such claims to be made at latest within twelve months from the date of the Ordinance.

The Commissioners were to be authorised to summon witnesses, and to punish by fine or imprisonment those who should fail to appear or refuse to give evidence. The rate of purchase between the years 1815 and 1839 was to be the same as that fixed by the New South Wales Act of September, 1840, but 50 per cent. was added above these rates for persons not personally resident in New Zealand or not having a resident agent there. Goods, when given to the Natives in barter for land, were to be estimated at three times their selling-price in Sydney at the time. A scale of fees to be paid by land claimants was scheduled with the Ordinance, and Major Richmond and Colonel Godfrey, who had been previously selected by Sir George Gipps, were reappointed Land Commissioners by Governor Hobson.

Up to the 1st of August, 1841, about six hundred claims to land in all parts of the colony had been referred by the Governor to the Commissioners for hearing, some of which had regard to small patches of ground, others to millions of acres, different parties in many instances asserting rights to the same tracts of land. All awards recommended by the Commissioners, on being approved by the Governor, were notified in the *Government Gazette*.

Subsequently to these proceedings Governor Fitzroy, who succeeded Governor Hobson in the government of New Zealand, appointed a new Commissioner, and, without the cases being further reheard, the former decisions were reversed, the result being that several hundred grants of land were issued to the land-claimants, some of these grants conveying to the grantees a greater quantity of land than they claimed to have purchased from the Native owners.

In consequence of the complications caused by these proceedings, Governor Grey, in 1849, considered it expedient, with a view to the final adjustment of the whole matter, to obtain legislation to quiet the titles to these lands, and an Ordinance was accordingly passed for that purpose, which received Her Majesty's confirmation.

In 1856 an Act was passed, extending the time for purchasers to lodge their claims, and for the appointment of Commissioners to carry it into effect. Another Act was passed by the Assembly in 1858 for the like purpose. Many persons who claimed to have purchased lands from the Natives never obtained their land, in consequence of refusing to acknowledge the power of the Commissioners.

With regard to the area claimed throughout the colony by these alleged purchasers, Mr. Commissioner Bell, the present Agent-General, in his report on the settlement of land-