

1903.
NEW ZEALAND.

“THE LAND FOR SETTLEMENTS CONSOLIDATION ACT, 1900”

(REPORT ON).

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly in compliance with Subsection (2), Section 73, of “The Land for Settlements Consolidation Act, 1900.”

The LAND PURCHASE INSPECTOR to the Right Hon. the PRIME MINISTER.

SIR,—

I have the honour to report the transactions under “The Land for Settlements Consolidation Act, 1900,” that have taken place during the twelve months which ended on the 31st March, 1903.

The Board of Land Purchase Commissioners held 36 meetings—the Wellington Board meeting 12 times, the Canterbury Board 9 times, the Marlborough and Southland Boards each 4 times, the Otago Board 3 times, and the Auckland, Hawke’s Bay, Taranaki, and Westland Boards once each.

About 150 properties were offered for sale, aggregating 740,871 acres. The Board dealt with 108, and recommended the purchase or exchange of 59, containing 404,426 acres.

The Government having approved, negotiations were completed with the owners of 11 estates, containing 29,910 acres, which cost £142,460; and 8 estates, containing 82,696 acres, valued at £208,708, were acquired, but not wholly paid for within the year.

The Arbitration Court sat at Napier on the 29th January, and awarded the Crown 28,857 acres of the Milbourne Estate for £142,262, including costs of one side. The Court also allowed the vendors to retain 600 acres and one homestead. The amount which the Government offered for 29,550 acres was £118,200.

The purchase of 8,542 acres of the Longbush and Tablelands Estate was completed, but the negotiations for taking a portion of the estate, the freehold of which is held by Native owners, failed, the Supreme Court deciding that Native land, although held under a Crown title, could not be taken compulsorily. The value of the purchase is somewhat injuriously affected by this unexpected decision.

The estates wholly paid for during the year are Argyll (Milbourne and Te Reinga), in Hawke’s Bay; Spotswood, in Taranaki; Linton, Longbush, and Tablelands, in Wellington; Kokatahi, in Westland; Eccleston, Mead, Chamberlain (Opawa), and Squires, in Canterbury; and Windsor Park (two parts) and Duncan, in Otago.

The total completed purchases for the year comprise 14 estates, containing 69,273 acres, which cost £349,452.

Besides these, negotiations were completed for the Bickerstaffe Estate (Colbeck’s) in Auckland; Wigan (Takapau), in Hawke’s Bay; Normandale (Western Hutt), in Wellington; Annan (Highfield), in Canterbury; and St. Helen’s (Kenton), in Otago. Exchanges were also completed at Birchhill and Awatere, in Marlborough, and Ruangarehu, in Hawke’s Bay.

The Levels Estate, containing 38,247 acres, was recommended for purchase and approved by the Government, but, as the owners declined to sell, proceedings were commenced to take the estate compulsorily. Since the close of the year, however, an agreement was arrived at to buy at £6 9s. per acre, and the estate will be taken possession of on the 31st March, 1904.

The Mount Vernon Estate, proceedings to take which compulsorily were commenced some time ago, has not yet been before the Court.

At Birchhill the New Zealand Land Association held freeholds of the best of the land in Mount Patriarch, Raglan, and Manuka Island Runs, and so practically prevented the Crown from leasing the large areas of pastoral country adjacent. The association agreed to sell these freeholds for one block of Crown lands, the advantage being as nearly as possible equal to the Crown and to the association.

At Awatere the Assets Realisation Board held freeholds interspersed with the Crown lands formerly held by them under pastoral lease, and it was arranged that the Board should transfer all its freeholds in one block to the Crown, and the Crown granted the Board all the Crown lands within the other block retained by the Board.