

It was found expedient to make terms with the most active and successful of these agents, and offer them inducements to enter the Government service. Without their co-operation it was almost hopeless to carry out to a successful issue the objects this House had in view when it placed at the Government's disposal such large sums of money.

Even with the assistance of these gentlemen, I have only to refer honorable Members to the Reports of the Land Purchase Officers and Agents laid on the Table of the House, to show that the difficulties which had to be encountered were of no ordinary kind, and yet the results are, I submit, on the whole very favourable to the country.

It should also be remembered that the peaceful aspect of Native affairs in the North Island has tended to advance the settlement of the country, and has increased the demand for land by capitalists from the South Island and the Australian colonies. In 1873, unimproved lands could be purchased in the Wai-kato for prices not exceeding ten shillings per acre; the same lands cannot now be purchased under from one to two pounds per acre. Such has been the competition for land, that the agents of private parties have gone into districts proclaimed under the Immigration and Public Works Act, and have purchased choice blocks at a higher rate than the Government were offering, with the full knowledge that they had no chance of obtaining a title during the currency of the Proclamation, but trusting to make their claims good when it should lapse.

I need not take up the time of the House by enlarging on this subject, but I have said enough to convince honorable Members that, in acquiring the estate which has been secured, we have had much to contend against from the competition of our own countrymen, to say nothing of the trouble and anxiety of dealing with a race so proverbially jealous and tenacious of their lands as the Natives.

With these preliminary remarks, I will now give a statement of the operations respecting the purchase of lands up to the end of the past financial year.

The land-purchase operations North of Auckland have been carried on by Mr. White, R.M., Mongonui; Mr. Kemp, Civil Commissioner, Auckland; Lieut.-Colonel McDonnell, Mr. Brissenden, and Mr. Preece.

A return presented to Parliament last year, by command of His Excellency the Governor, showed that, in the

Hokianga District—the Government had acquired by purchase 2 blocks of land, containing 11,086 acres, at a cost of £1,904 5s. 7d., or 3s. 5¼d. per acre; in the

Bay of Islands District—4 blocks of land, containing 28,999 acres, at a cost of £2,965 12s., or 2s. 0¾d. per acre; and in the

Kaipara District—6 blocks of land, containing 29,018 acres, at a cost of £2,633 19s. 6d., or 1s. 9¾d. per acre—making altogether 69,103 acres, and costing £7,503 17s. 1d., the average price being 2s. 2d. per acre.

This cost includes surveys and all incidental expenses.

The return also shows that negotiations had been entered into for the further purchase of 20 blocks of land, the area of which was estimated at 248,490 acres. The amount paid on these 20 blocks was £1,207 10s.

These transactions will be more easily read in the following tabular form:—

DISTRICT.	TRANSACTIONS COMPLETED.				TRANSACTIONS INCOMPLETE.		
	No. of Blocks.	Area.	Total Cost.	Price per Acre.	No. of Blocks.	Area.	Amount Paid.
Hokianga	2	11,086	£ 1,904 5 7	3/5¼	4	57,190	£ 448 1 6
Bay of Islands	4	28,999	2,965 12 0	2/0¾	5	78,300	21 17 6
Kaipara	6	29,018	2,633 19 6	1/9¾	6	43,000	481 0 0
Mongonui ... ..	...	...	...	...	3	62,000	256 11 0
Whangarei ... ..	...	...	...	...	2	8,000	" ...
	12	*69,103	7,503 17 1	2/2	20	248,490	1,207 10 0

* Pakiri Block, 20,000 acres (payments, £1,600), shown as incomplete on 30th June, 1875. Waipapa Block, area overstated 2,152 acres.