

Concurrently with the development of this policy, limited private alienation was permitted by the legislation of 1900, and in districts hitherto restricted, such as the King-country and Upper Whanganui, many blocks were leased with the consent and upon the recommendation of the Councils. The tendency towards "free trade," which had persisted throughout the long course of legislation, developed in 1905 a demand for the removal of all restrictions against leasing, and the adherents of that policy succeeded in placing on the statute-book section 16 of "The Maori Land Settlement Act, 1905," which permitted a greater measure of freedom in leasing Native lands than had been enjoyed for over a decade.

There is no doubt in our minds that the legislation of 1894 to 1900 and that of 1900, by tying the hands of the Crown in the further acquisition of Native lands, by restricting the leasing of those lands and by substituting a system depending for its success on the willingness of the Native owners to vest areas in the administrative bodies constituted, created a deadlock and a block in the settlement of the unoccupied lands. On the other hand, the vigorous settlement of Crown lands under the Land Act and the Land for Settlements Acts exhausted the available supply of lands suitable for close settlement. The agitation of 1904 and 1905 forced the Crown once more into the field to resume its purchases, forced Parliament to sanction the compulsory vesting of lands in the Maori Land Boards, and reopened the free leasing of Native lands.

Upon the Maori owners, apart from the bewilderment produced by conflicts of policy, the legislation had a twofold effect: Thrown to a great extent upon their own resources, and actuated by the example of farmers newly settled in their midst, alarmed by the criticisms of the Press and the drastic schemes outlined therein or from the political platform, pointing in the direction of compulsory seizure and practical confiscation, they contemplated the possibility of utilising their lands in the pakeha way. A survey of the position revealed the difficulties inherent in individual ownership, which prevented organized effort as well as individual action. The demand to be assisted to farm their own lands, under a system affording scope to the more capable and energetic individuals of the community, was conveyed to Parliament by petition and the representations of the Maori members. In 1905 and 1906 this new aspect of the Native-land question was presented to the country, and occupied, among other matters already reviewed, a prominent place in the deliberations of Parliament.

EXISTING MODES OF DISPOSITION.

The various methods of alienating or rendering Native lands available for settlement may thus be summarised:—

1. By sale—

(a.) To the Crown, in accordance with sections 20 to 25 of "The Maori Lands Administration Act, 1905." The Crown must buy at not less than the assessed value, and must see that sufficient land is reserved for the support and maintenance of the vendors. The Crown can, by obtaining the signatures of a majority in value of the owners, acquire the whole of any block on payment to the Receiver-General of the purchase-money for the interests of the minority who have not signed.

(b.) To private persons—

(i.) If the land was a separate area owned by not more than two persons, the title to such land as a separate area having been ascertained by partition or otherwise prior to the 31st October, 1895.

(ii.) If owned by more than two owners, then subject to removal of restrictions by the Governor in Council on the recommendation of the Maori Land Board.

And subject in either case to compliance with certain formalities and to confirmation.

2. By lease—

(a.) By direct negotiation between lessees and Native owners, subject to compliance with formalities in the execution of deeds