

finally awarded to Maniapoto was 1,844,780 acres. Parliament when providing for the ascertainment of titles also prohibited the alienation of lands within the area except to the Crown. The owners were not permitted to sell, lease, or otherwise render the lands available for settlement, except by selling to the Crown practically on the latter's own terms. The Crown commenced to purchase in 1892, and by 1907 had acquired 753,215 acres at a cost of £177,685, or an average of 4s. 6d. an acre. From the year 1900 onwards leases and timber-cutting rights were permitted, and in 1907 over 185,000 acres had been alienated in that manner. In 1907, therefore, the Maniopoto Tribe had parted with more than one-half of its lands. European settlement in a new district with great possibilities coming at the period of the most active development throughout the Auckland Province introduced a land boom. The Native population enjoyed substantial revenues from rents and royalties and from the periodical sale of lands to the Crown or private individuals. There was no need for or incentive to farming, although here and there some progressive and thrifty individuals used the capital resulting from sales or leases to farm some of the lands they still retained. An estimate made in 1929, although incomplete, showed that one hundred Maoris of the Maniapoto Tribe were milking herds totalling 2,500 head. Some were engaged in sheep-farming, but no figures are available to show the extent of that activity.

There is no doubt that whatever inclination there may have been among Ngati-Maniapoto towards farming and agricultural pursuits—and they are a very alert and intelligent people—their circumstances did not favour its exploitation; the easily acquired and abundant supply of money derived from the alienation of their lands was for the time ample for their needs.

During the Great War the Native owners of the sites of the townships of Taumarunui, Te Kuiti, and Otorohanga sold the freehold thereof to the Crown. The rent revenues derived from these township leases were very considerable but ceased with the sale, and when the proceeds of the sale were exhausted many families found themselves in poor circumstances. Other factors came into play after the war. The post-war depression revealed the unsoundness of many of the leaseholds, both Native and Crown, and led to investigations by a Deteriorated Lands Commission in the case of Crown leaseholds, and by a special Commission in the case of Native leaseholds. A considerable number of lessees of both classes of land abandoned their holdings. The timber industry felt the full force of the depression. The prevailing economic difficulties seriously affected the finances of local bodies, and were further accentuated by the non-payment of rates on Native lands.

Towards the end of last decade the resources on which the Maniapoto people had hitherto depended were visibly and rapidly declining. Government and private finance for the purchase of freehold lands had been almost exhausted; the rents of Native lands in the King-country were being scaled down; standards of living attained during times of prosperity were difficult to reduce in accord with the shrinkage in revenue; and the people had not so far been constrained to utilize the lands which they retained.

Matters came to a head when the pressure from local bodies in regard to Native rates led the Government in 1927 to survey conditions in the King-country and other districts. The steps taken were similar to those adopted in regard to North Auckland and already detailed earlier in this statement.

*Consolidation of Titles.*

A scheme for the consolidation of interests in Native lands was applied to the King-country at the same time as to other districts. The Consolidation Officers were confronted at the outset with many difficulties, mostly psychological. It was not an uncommon experience to find sections of the people hostile to any policy at variance with the procedure of the Native Land Court, to which they had become accustomed. In some quarters the work was looked upon with suspicion, and was retarded in consequence. The arithmetic of the problem was complicated enough without the discordant human factors.

The lands affected by the consolidation schemes are as follow :—

Scheme.	Area.		Number of Titles.	Number of Owners.
	A.	R. P.		
Waitomo (comprising Waitomo, part Otorohanga, and part Taumarunui Counties, and Te Kuiti Borough)	270,422	0 16	6,122	15,409
Otorohanga (comprising part Otorohanga and part Waipa Counties, and Otorohanga Town Board District)	91,600	0 15		6,871
Kawhia (comprising Kawhia and part Raglan Counties)	33,313	0 19		3,314
Hauaroa (comprising part Taumarunui and part Ohura Counties, and Taumarunui Borough)	11,789	1 9		986
Total .. .. .	407,124	2 19	6,122	26,580

It will be noted that there were 6,122 separate titles affected, or 643 more than the aggregate of the titles that came under the North Auckland consolidation schemes; on the other hand, the entries of the names of individual owners were nearly fifty thousand less than in the northern schemes.

In regard to valuations, the Consolidation staff experienced some difficulty on account of a practice of the Valuation Department in grouping a number of Native-owned lands under one assessment. As these lands varied in quality and extent of improvements, the values of interests in each title for consolidation purposes could not be arrived at without distribution by special valuations.