

CROWN PURCHASES OF NATIVE LAND.

Native land purchased by the Crown amounted to 476 acres. Since 1910, 1,543,346 acres of Native land have been acquired through the Native Land Purchase Board.

The estimated area of Native land still owned by Maoris in the North Island is as follows :—

	Acres.	Acres.
Estimated as at 31st March, 1933	3,856,291
Sales to Crown	476	
Sales to individuals	4,693	
		5,169
		3,851,122

GENERAL.

Judge Gilfedder, who for the past twelve years had been stationed in Wellington as Judge of the Ikaroa and South Island Native Land Court Districts, retired on the 30th June, 1933. Mr. John Harvey, formerly Registrar of the Native Land Court for the Tairāwhiti District, was appointed a Judge to succeed Judge Gilfedder as from the 1st July, 1933.

Chief Judge Jones relinquished the positions of Under-Secretary and Native Trustee on the 28th November, 1933, but retained his offices of Chief Judge of the Native Land Court and East Coast Commissioner. He resigned from the latter office, however, on the 31st March last, when Mr. J. S. Jessep was appointed to the position in his stead.

Subsequently to the relinquishment by Chief Judge Jones of the dual position of Under-Secretary and Native Trustee, an extensive reorganization of the Department has been effected. The Head Office and the Native Trust Office staffs have been brought together and are now combined as one organization, and the administration of the Department has been strengthened to meet the increased activities consequent upon the policy of the development and settlement of Native lands.

Following upon certain complaints made by the Controller and Auditor-General in his annual report to Parliament with respect to alleged irregularities in connection with Native land development operations, the Government decided in December last to appoint a Royal Commission to investigate the administration of Native affairs generally. The Commission was appointed on the 28th February, 1934, the Commissioners being the Hon. Mr. Justice Smith (Chairman), the Hon. John Alexander, C.M.G., Mr. D. G. Johnston, and Mr. L. W. Nelson. The order of reference was made sufficiently wide to bring within the scope of the inquiry all matters affecting the administration of Native affairs and Maori-owned funds.

The Commission commenced its public sittings at Wellington on the 16th March, 1934, and sittings were also held at Auckland, Whangarei, Rotorua, and Gisborne. The Commission's report has not yet been presented.

The area of Native land available for alienation has been steadily diminished from year to year, which, combined with the conditions obtaining in the farming and pastoral industries during the past three years, have caused the dealings in Native land both by way of sale and lease to tend to decrease each year. The area alienated to private persons during the year ended 31st March, 1934, however, was only slightly less than during the preceding year, but there was a considerable falling-off in the purchases by the Crown, which amounted to a nominal area of 476 acres only.

No licenses were issued to Native Interpreters during the year, while one license was revoked at the request of the holder.

TABLE A.—NATIVE LAND COURTS.

RETURN OF BUSINESS AND FEES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH, 1934.

Native Land Court.								
Number of sittings	89	Number of partitions made	189					
Number of cases notified	13,100	Area affected (acres)	18,133					
Number of cases for which orders were made	4,512	Number of investigations of title	3					
Number of cases dismissed	1,094	Area affected (acres)	2,895					
Number of cases adjourned <i>sine die</i>	7,497	Number of succession orders made	3,446					
		Number of other orders made	1,516					
Native Appellate Court.								
Number of sittings	5	Native Land Court decisions annulled	1					
Number of cases notified	20	Appeals dismissed or withdrawn	3					
Native Land Court decisions varied	1	Appeals adjourned <i>sine die</i>	1					
Native Land Court decisions affirmed	3	Applications under section 257/31 ordered					
Native Land Court decisions referred back to Native Land Court	8	Applications under section 257/31 dismissed	1					
		Applications under section 257/31 adjourned <i>sine die</i>	2					
Court Fees.								
Fees received	£3,393 4s. 8d.							