

1941.
NEW ZEALAND.

NATIVE DEPARTMENT.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE UNDER-SECRETARY FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH, 1941.

Laid on the Table of the House of Representatives by Leave.

The UNDER-SECRETARY, NATIVE DEPARTMENT, to the Hon. the MINISTER OF NATIVE AFFAIRS.

SIR,—

Native Department, Wellington, 30th May, 1941.

I have the honour to present herewith the annual report upon the activities of this Department, excluding Native land development and Native housing, which are dealt with in a separate report submitted by the Board of Native Affairs. The report covers the financial year ended 31st March, 1941.

I have, &c.,

O. N. CAMPBELL,
Under-Secretary and Native Trustee.

The Hon. F. Langstone, Minister of Native Affairs.

GENERAL REPORT.

During the past year all activities of Native administration have been well maintained and, notwithstanding war conditions, there has been some expansion of the Department's operations. As at the 31st March, 1941, the personnel of the Department totalled 484 officers, comprising office staff (215 permanent and 153 temporary) and field staff (21 permanent and 95 temporary). In addition, the Department has on its pay-roll 145 men who are employed on a weekly-wage basis as stockmen, shepherds, ploughmen, teamsters, truck-drivers, and general farm hands. Apart from these employees the necessary labour for land development and farming activities is supplied by Natives who are engaged wherever possible on a contract basis. The aggregate increase in personnel during the year amounted to 70 officers, a number of whom are female temporary clerks appointed for the duration of the war to replace men on active service. In all, 61 members of the staff are serving with the armed forces, there being 45 in the Expeditionary Force, 9 in the R.A.F. and R.N.Z.A.F., 2 in the Navy, 1 in the Fleet Air Arm, 1 in the Y.M.C.A. overseas, and 3 on home-service duty. It is pleasing to note that no less than 16 of these officers have gained commissions, and it is gratifying, also, to record the response made by Maori members of the staff to the call for volunteers for the 28th (Maori) Battalion. In addition to officers serving in the forces, 7 are on loan to the various Defence Services Departments. The Department now has 5 district offices and 17 sub-offices, new branches having been opened during the year at Hawera and Masterton.

The Department continued to co-operate with the Social Security, Education, and Health Departments on matters affecting the general welfare of the Maori people, and during the past year the field staff has been able to render valuable assistance to the Army Department in the recruiting campaign for the Maori Battalion.

The Maori population has again shown a steady increase, the figure at the 31st March, 1941, being 92,248, as compared with 90,980 at the corresponding date last year.

Native land development operations have been continued, and every effort is being made to increase the productivity of all suitable areas. Despite difficulties caused by war conditions very satisfactory progress has been made with the Native-housing programme.

The difficulties previously encountered by visiting Maoris in obtaining temporary accommodation in Hamilton have now been solved by the establishment of a Maori hostelry, the cost of which is being met by public subscription and by grants from local bodies in the district together with a pound-for-pound subsidy from Civil List (Native Purposes) funds. The building is in the course of erection and should be completed shortly.

BOARD OF NATIVE AFFAIRS.

Departmental functions which are administered under the control of the Board of Native Affairs are fully dealt with in parliamentary paper G.—10. These comprise Native land development and assistance to Maori farmers, promotion of employment amongst Maoris, Native housing, farming activities, and investments of the Native Trustee and the Maori Land Boards. The Board also controls the expenditure and investment of moneys by the East Coast Commissioner and the mortgaging of lands vested in the Commissioner.

RETIREMENTS OF JUDGES.

On the 31st July, 1940, Chief Judge C. E. MacCormick retired after thirty-four years of service. Judge MacCormick was in legal practice in Auckland from 1887 to 1906, when he was appointed to the Native Land Court Bench. From that time onwards he has rendered valuable service in Native affairs not only in New Zealand, but also in the Cook Islands and in Samoa. He succeeded to the Chief Judgeship on the 1st January, 1940, on the retirement of Chief Judge R. N. Jones, O.B.E. At a valedictory gathering tributes were paid to Chief Judge MacCormick by the Hon. the Attorney-General, Maori leaders, and members of the legal profession.

During the year, also, Judge J. W. Browne retired after a record service of almost sixty years. Judge Browne first entered the service in 1881. In 1894 he was promoted to Registrar of the Native Land Court at Wellington, and in 1906 he was appointed a Judge, being successively stationed at Auckland, Gisborne, and, finally, Wanganui until his retirement on the 31st March, 1941. A farewell gathering in honour of Judge Browne was the occasion of valedictory tributes from members of the legal profession and representative Maoris in recognition of his distinguished services.

Judge G. P. Shepherd, who has been elevated to the Chief Judgeship in succession to Chief Judge MacCormick, joined the Public Service in 1906 as a clerk in the Justice Department. He was transferred to the Native Department in 1919, and three years later became Chief Clerk, which position he occupied until 1938, when he was appointed Judge of the Native Land Court for the Ikaroa and South Island Districts. He was admitted as a solicitor in 1926.

LEGISLATION.

Three important matters affecting Natives and Native lands were dealt with in legislation enacted during 1940-41.

Firstly, with regard to the adoption of children by Natives, the Native Land Court had in the past regarded the husband and wife of a Native customary union as having the qualifications required for the purpose of an order of adoption under Part IX of the Native Land Act, 1931, but this view was overruled by the Supreme Court in a case under the Adoption of Children Act. It was desirable to remove all doubt, and legislation was enacted whereby a customary union is deemed, for the purpose of adoption, to be a valid marriage so long as it continues.

The facilitation of the exchange of land between the Crown and the Natives was also dealt with, and power was given to the Native Land Court to make orders of exchange in such cases.

Machinery was provided, also, to enable the Court to amend existing titles so as to include portions of closed roads.

All of these matters involved amendments of the law, the remaining legislation being of the usual "washing up" nature.

ALIENATIONS OF NATIVE LAND.

The number of alienations during the year was 441, affecting an area of 38,589 acres, compared with 508 alienations and 38,766 acres last year. Particulars are as follows:—

	1939-40.		1940-41.	
	Number.	Acres.	Number.	Acres.
Sales	146	3,664	109	6,734
Leases	362	35,102	332	31,855
Totals	508	38,766	441	38,589

NOTE.—A proportion of these alienations was in favour of Native alienees.

The estimated area of Native land remaining to Maoris is 4,008,000 acres.

MAORI LAND BOARDS.

The operations of the seven Maori Land Boards have been fully sustained during the period under review.

The total receipts and payments for the year were respectively £415,805 and £439,827, as against £408,619 and £431,815 for the previous year. As at the 31st March, 1941, the liability to Native beneficiaries was £461,736, whilst funds held or invested by the Boards aggregated £626,370, under the following headings:—

	£
Government securities	75,238
Mortgages and charges	340,636
On deposit with Native Trustee	189,614
Cash balances	20,882
	£626,370

The area of Native land vested in the Boards as at the 31st March, 1941, amounted to 660,240 acres.

NATIVE TRUSTEE.

The Native Trustee acts in the capacity of agent or trustee for some ten thousand Native beneficiaries, and the various functions of the Native Trust division have been maintained.

There are 1,582 estates under administration, in respect of which funds total £77,088. Native reserves comprise an area of approximately 94,000 acres, and the aggregate amount received annually by way of rental from those areas under lease is approximately £41,000.

A detailed account of the operations of the ten stations farmed by the Native Trustee appears in the report of the Board of Native Affairs, but the following table indicates the scope of operations during the year:—

Total area of farm stations	42,510 acres.
Number of bales of wool produced	1,005
Proceeds of live-stock sold—	
Sheep	£15,826
Cattle	£8,683
Live-stock on hand at 31st March, 1941—	
Sheep	50,416
Cattle	5,693

The following are particulars of the funds invested or held by the Native Trustee at 31st March, 1941:—

	£
Local bodies' securities	5,100
Mortgages—	
To Natives	408,231
To others	6,617
	414,848
Station and other overdrafts	145,862
Properties acquired under mortgages	15,700
On fixed deposit	20,000
Cash balance	55,774
	£657,284

The Native Trustee's liability to beneficiaries, including the Maori Land Boards, at 31st March, 1941, was £395,272, and his accumulated reserves totalled £120,000.

FINANCE.

The volume of business transacted by the Department during the year is indicated by the following figures. The corresponding amounts for last year were: Payments, £1,789,876; receipts, £1,304,541:—

	Total Payments.	Total Receipts.
	£	£
Consolidated Fund—		
Civil List (Native Purposes)	4,036	..
Special Acts (Arawa tribes)	6,000	..
Vote "Native"	145,634	24,400
Court fees .. .. .	..	4,738
Public Works Fund—		
Vote "Native Land Settlement"	1,010,847	772,403*
Receipts under Native Housing Act .. .. .	..	14,222
Native Trustee's Account	170,434	177,311
Maori Land Boards	439,827†	415,805†
	1,776,778	1,408,879

* Receipts from Native-land-development schemes, £478,114; grant from the Consolidated Fund, £291,669; sundries, £2,620. † Does not include deposits and withdrawals in respect of Deposit Accounts with Native Trustee.

NATIVE LAND COURT.

A statistical return of the activities of the Native Land and Appellate Courts during the year is appended in Table A. The volume of business shows a slight decrease as compared with that of the preceding year.

PROMOTION OF EMPLOYMENT AMONGST MAORIS.

During the year the number of Native workers employed by the Department dropped from four thousand to approximately two thousand five hundred.

The total expenditure on wages was £408,730, of which £326,173 was in respect of Native land development schemes and the balance applied towards the improvement of privately owned Native land and the erection of dwellings financed from the Special Housing Fund. On land-development schemes subsidies ranged from 50 per cent. to 100 per cent. With a few exceptions all works were undertaken on a contract basis.

EXPENDITURE FROM CONSOLIDATED FUND.

For the year ended 31st March, 1941, the gross expenditure from Consolidated Fund vote "Native" was £437,303, and the recoveries totalled £24,400. Brief particulars of the net expenditure covering general costs of administration and grants for Native purposes are as follows:—

General administration—			
Salaries and staff expenses (including travelling)	£	£	£
	118,745		
Office expenses (rent, stationery, postages, &c.)		13,523	
	132,268		
<i>Less</i> recoveries from the Native Trustee, Maori Land Boards, and Miscellaneous	24,091		
	108,177		
Purchase of equipment (motor-vehicles, office building, and furniture)		314	
		108,491	
Grants for Native purposes—			
Ahuwhenua Trophy			27
Maori employment promotion		291,669	
Maori participation, Centennial Exhibition		1,192	
Maori Purposes Fund		375	
Rehabilitation, Hawke's Bay flood areas		36	
Water-supplies		50	
Sundries		31	
		293,380	
Protection of Native land—			
Destruction of rabbits		1,032	
Clearing of noxious weeds		5,000	
		6,032	
Taranaki lands compensation (paid to Taranaki Trust Board)			5,000
			£412,903

Although the total cost of administration amounted to £132,582, the net cost to the State, after deducting sums of £24,091 (recovered from the Native Trustee and the Maori Land Boards) and £4,738 (fees of the Native Land Courts and the Maori Land Boards collected in stamps and credited to the Consolidated Fund), was £103,753. The item £1,192 for Maori participation in the Centennial Exhibition represents sundry closing expenditure, less recoveries by way of proceeds of entertainments and sales £309. The expenditure on destruction of rabbits and noxious weeds on Native land is actually made by the Department of Agriculture, and, in accordance with a standing arrangement, that Department is recouped from vote "Native."

An annual amount of £7,000 is provided for Native purposes from the Consolidated Fund under Part V of the Civil List Act, 1920. Of this sum, £3,600 is administered by the Department of Health and applied towards the cost of medical and nursing services for Maoris. The balance is disbursed at the discretion of the Native Minister for purposes having for their object the general welfare of the people. The amount expended during the year was £4,036, which is considerably lower than previous years, due in no small measure to the operation of the social-security legislation, which has practically eliminated allowances in necessaries from the Civil List funds to meet cases of indigence.

Sums of £6,000 were paid to the Arawa Trust Board, £5,000 to the Taranaki Trust Board, and £3,000 to the Tuwharetoa Trust Board representing grants authorized by statute or appropriated by Parliament for the general benefit of the tribes concerned.

DISTRICT REPORTS.

The following are interesting extracts from reports on departmental operations in each district:—

Tokerau and Waikato-Maniapoto Districts.

The various departmental activities in these districts, which are controlled from the Auckland Office, have proceeded steadily and along the lines to which reference has been made in previous reports. The finances of the Waikato-Maniapoto District Maori Land Board continue to be buoyant, and the usual financial operations have taken place. With further money available for Native housing, further advances are being made, and repayments on the whole are very satisfactory.

Native Land Court.—The usual sittings of the Court have been held throughout the district. An event of importance has been the retirement during the year of Chief Judge MacCormick, who was also Judge of the Waikato-Maniapoto District and President of the Waikato-Maniapoto Board. The Court work in both districts has been, since the retirement of the Chief Judge, carried on by the Tokerau District Judge and by Commissioners recently appointed.

Chief Judge MacCormick has been associated for a long period with this office and at times with both districts, and his retirement, due to advancing years, has been greatly regretted by the Natives and by officers of the Department and the Court. At a large and representative gathering held in Auckland, leave was taken of the retiring Chief Judge when tribute was paid to his work and his personality.

Housing.—Progress during the year has been hampered to some extent by stalling difficulties consequent on the war, which has also impeded progress in housing and caused a shortage of certain materials and increased costs. In this sphere of activity progress is, however, steady. A commencement was made in improving the housing of agricultural workers at Pukekohe out of moneys made available by the Government from Consolidated Fund.

Maori Welfare.—The general welfare of the people so far as can be seen is moving steadily forward. No serious outbreaks of sickness have taken place. It is pleasing to record the ready response to the Empire's call by the young men from these districts and also the assistance given by the people to the various patriotic funds.

Consolidation.—In consolidation of lands a further move towards finality was made at Waimiha. This instalment of the Maniapoto Scheme now awaits approval by the Hon. the Minister, and final ordering will then follow. In the Tokerau district further instalments of the various schemes have also been sent forward for Ministerial consideration.

Waiariki District.

Native Land Court.—Twenty-four sittings of the Court were held in different centres in the district, and, in addition to the volume of business dealt with in open Court, various matters have been dealt with by the Judge in Chambers. Owing to the fact that few applications for rate-charging orders have been made there has been a marked decrease in the total number of cases notified for hearing. The number of orders made, however, compares with the figure for the previous year.

Alienations of Native land have declined. Applications for confirmation of transfers are few and sales are confirmed only under special circumstances. Dealings with timber tend to increase and have required special consideration. Several cases of illicit cutting of timber have resulted in prompt action being taken against the offenders.

Native Appellate Court.—One sitting of the Native Appellate Court was held at Rotorua, when one appeal was disposed of.

Consolidation.—Owing to the whole of the clerical section of the consolidation staff being absent on active service there has been no progress in consolidation of titles during the year.

Housing.—With the co-operation of the local office of the Public Works Department steady progress has been made during the year, Native labour, under the supervision of that Department, being utilized in all cases. The expenditure of Board beneficiaries' moneys for the improvement of their housing conditions is supervised by the Housing Branch, and a good deal of general welfare work in this respect has been carried out during the year. A full report with statistics on the housing work done in this district is contained in the report of the Board of Native Affairs.

Maori Land Board.—The financial activities of the Board continue to increase, and receipts, £51,403, and disbursements, £52,941, show increases of 4 per cent. and 19 per cent. respectively over the previous year. In all alienations that come before it for confirmation the Court directs that the proceeds, whether rent, royalty, or purchase-money, be paid to the Board for administration, and these funds are carefully controlled in the interests of the beneficiaries.

As at 31st March, 1941, the financial position of the Board was as follows:—

	£
Liability to Native beneficiaries	77,034
Cash balances	3,605
On deposit with Native Trustee	40,562
Invested in farming properties	72,107
Invested in mortgages	6,792
Invested in primary-production activities	4,728
Reserves	48,305

Tribal Meetings.—During the year two very important meetings were held in the Tunohopu Meeting-house, Ohinemutu. The first, held on the 1st July, 1940, was attended by delegates from the western end of the Waiariki district, and as a result of this meeting a committee was set up in each of the Maori centres for the purpose of increasing certain lines of primary production, regimenting the man and woman power, and commencing a programme for the repatriation of Maori soldiers. The second meeting was held on the 12th March, 1941, when progress was reported by representatives from every part of the Waiariki district. At the invitation of the delegates this latter meeting was

attended by the Director of Primary Production and the Under-Secretary of the Native Department. The meeting was an outstanding success in that a truly representative Maori gathering left fortified with departmental assurances that their efforts were thoroughly appreciated and that their aims and objects had and would have full support. The larger question of repatriation of the young Maori people, soldier and civilian, was also discussed.

Rates.—During the year a good deal of progress has been made in the matter of dealing with the rates problems.

After a certain amount of preliminary groundwork on the part of the Court and its officers, the Whakatane County Council and the Rangitaiki Drainage Board combined their activities in the appointment of a prominent Maori leader to report upon each individual rate assessment of the district, and to endeavour to arrange for the liquidation of past rates by payment of present and future levies. His operations have had very pleasing results, and out of a total of 1,542 applications for rate-charging orders the Court has been able to fully dispose of 758 applications without making a single order. In the great majority of these cases it is anticipated that no further rate trouble will ensue, and the balance of the applications still to be dealt with are in a district not covered, while a good many will be withdrawn by the County Council on account of the indigency of the owners and the impracticability of making any productive use of the land.

In the Opotiki County a commencement has been made for dealing with the rates problem along the lines adopted in the Whakatane County. Some 304 cases are before the Court, and of these about one-third have already been liquidated by arrangements for payment of part of the rates and the writing-off of the balance.

In conclusion, the Court appreciates the reasonable manner in which the County officers and the Natives themselves have approached the rating question. There will, no doubt, remain some cases where recalcitrant factors oppose any settlement by peaceful means, leaving the only course open to the Court that of issuing charging-orders and appointing receivers to effect a settlement of the encumbrance.

National War Effort.—In June last the Board, in conjunction with local Maori Elders, formed a Convening Committee for the purpose of organizing and co-operating with the rest of the district in the various phases of the national war effort. District committees were set up from Cape Runaway to Matakana Island and back as far as Te Whaiti, Ruatahuna, and Taupo. Their functions were—

- (1) To assist in increasing those primary products which the Director of Primary Production has called for as part of the national effort :
- (2) To organize and regiment the Maori man-power in order that the race would be able to pull its weight in the national effort :
- (3) To prepare a programme and commence the work necessary for the rehabilitation of the Maori members of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force.

Increased Primary Production.—The call of the Director of Primary Production that affected the Waiariki district was for increased maize, barley, and bacon production, and in this direction the Board and the Committees have attained substantial results.

The Natives at Te Teko planted and harvested a little over 100 acres of barley on land that was not suitable for maize-production. The effort, though small, was not intended to be other than a token of the will of these people to do whatever might be asked of them.

So far as bacon-production was concerned, the Horohoro District Committee changed over entirely from light-weight porkers to heavy baconers. This Committee was able to report that it had carried out its programme and had produced some 40 tons of bacon where no bacon had been produced before.

The main call, however, was for maize-production, and it was suggested that an extra 4,000 acres should be planted in order that the Dominion could become independent of imported maize. It is noteworthy that the District Committees here contributed 2,800 acres of crops towards this effort. With old areas replanted and the extra areas brought in the Committees are handling for this season approximately 3,600 acres of maize.

The crops have turned out exceptionally well. The maize is now being harvested, and there is every indication that it will be a particularly heavy crop.

Rehabilitation.—Under this heading the Committees are busily engaged in listing up those areas of land suitable and available for rehabilitating their soldier representatives. This is a very important phase of the Committees' activities, and they feel sure that the Government will assist them in every way possible in the development of these lands.

Tairāwhiti District.

Native Land Court.—During the year some twenty sittings of the Court were held. As each succeeding year legislation tends to extend the assistance given to Natives in the development of their lands, the provision of better housing conditions, and in education and general welfare work both individually and communally, so also has the work of the Court been increased and greater responsibilities placed on its officers. This promotion of the general welfare of the people is reflected in the increasing interest taken by them in the work of the Court and Board, especially by the younger generation who were in the past so prone to leave everything affecting their lands to their elders.

Although there has been a slight decrease in the volume of business transacted, the number of orders made reaches the high figure of 5,135. The revenue from fees is higher than that of the preceding year.

During the period under review 1,817 succession orders were made, involving, in the majority of cases, the distribution of rents, farm profits, and other moneys held to the credit of deceased persons. The total succession duty collected from various sources and paid to the Stamp Office amounted to £1,526, representing assessments on individual interests in excess of £200 valued at £76,300. The Court investigated the titles to what may be regarded as the last of the Papatipu lands in the Poverty Bay area, and as befitting the occasion, great interest was evidenced in the proceedings by both Maori and pakeha alike.

Partition and exchange orders have decreased in number this year, but still represent a large proportion of the work of the Court, and because of the many interests involved require more than ordinary diligence and investigation to ensure that the interests of all parties are adequately protected. In all cases the effect of partition and exchange is to provide suitable areas for development, sites for erection of houses, and the setting-apart of land for Maraes and other public and communal purposes.

Native Rates.—Orders securing rates for the local authorities amounted to 1,929, the greater proportion of which affected lands in the Wairoa County. In the Waiaapu County, which includes rateable Native land to the value of £94,072, a record collection of rates has been made—£7,950 being received from the annual levy of £10,315, representing a 77-per-cent. collection.

During the year there were only four cases where the Maori Land Board was appointed a Receiver to enforce rate charges due. In twenty cases the Board was discharged from its office as Receiver, sufficient revenue or other moneys having been collected to enable the charging-orders to be satisfied. Leases were arranged in eleven other cases for varying terms in respect of some 342 acres.

Other orders, affecting both the material and personal welfare of the Maori people, included adoptions, probates, letters of administration, vesting-orders, &c.

Consolidation.—As previously reported, five instalments of the Northern Waiaapu consolidation scheme have either been completed or are in the course of completion. These comprise farm lands and Native Township sections at Tikitiki, a large area south of the Maraehara River, and areas awarded to the Crown in satisfaction of rates and survey compromises. The balance and major portion of the scheme will have to remain in abeyance until the ownership of the Marangairoa 1b, Herupara No. 1, and Wharekahika Blocks are finally determined pursuant to sections 12, 13, and 14 of the Native Purposes Act, 1938.

Further progress has been made with the Mohaka scheme. All data have been finally checked, necessary amendments made, and provisional orders have been drawn up for the consideration of the Court.

Alienations.—There has been during the year an appreciable increase in the number of applications for confirmation of alienations of Native land. The greater number were in respect of alienations by way of lease, and it is a matter for satisfaction that many of the alienees have been Natives who in this district show a keen desire to acquire and resume the occupation of their ancestral lands.

Maori Welfare.—Considerable attention is given to the general welfare of the Maori people, especially to those who through age or disability are unable to provide for themselves. Assistance has been given towards obtaining social-security benefits, arranging for the treatment of the sick at home or in hospital, ensuring the proper use of rents or other moneys for the improvement of living and housing conditions and, in the case of minors, in providing for their maintenance, advancement, and education. Progress in this respect is facilitated by the co-operation of the officers of the Health, Child Welfare, Education, Social Security, and other Departments of State who contact the Maori people in any way.

Native Housing.—The policy of providing better housing conditions for the Maori people has been vigorously pursued. The repayments, both under the Act and the Special Housing Fund, are cause for general satisfaction. Statistical returns and matters dealing with the progress of housing will be more fully dealt with in the report of the Board of Native Affairs.

Maori Land Board.—Receipts and payments for the year are practically on a par with those of the preceding year.

At 31st March, 1941, the financial position of the Board was as follows:—

	£
Total receipts (including Native Trust stations)	127,405
Total expenditure (including Native Trust)	126,843
Government securities	51,923
Advances on mortgage, loans, and overdrafts	81,416
On deposit with Native Trustee	15,560
Cash balances	3,035
Reserves	52,544
Liability to Native beneficiaries	101,997

Aotea District.

Native Land Court.—In all, fifteen sittings were held, the Court sitting at Wanganui, Hawera, New Plymouth, Taumarunui, and Tokaanu. Orders were made in 1,087 cases, comprising 24 partitions, 603 succession, and 460 miscellaneous orders, including an investigation of title. In addition, the Court undertook the now customary miscellaneous investigations and inquiries arising from departmental administration. As in the past, the Court's time has been largely taken up with the vexed question of rates and the consequential and recurring applications for charging-orders. Fees collected totalled £923.

Applications for confirmation of alienations dealt with during the year totalled 128, an advance of 22 over the figure for 1939-40.

Alienations affecting timber continue to occupy the time and attention of the Court, which, in conjunction with the State Forest Service, is particularly attentive to the interests of the Natives alienating.

Maori Land Board.—Steps have been taken to lease all suitable areas of vested lands and Native township sections which have been previously unoccupied or have reverted to the Board. In this district is situated the largest area of native forest in the Dominion, and litigation, culminating in an appeal to the Privy Council, has now helped to clarify the position of the Crown, the Board, and the Natives in relation thereto.

Investments from Board funds during the year have been principally confined to loans for the erection, purchase, or renovation of houses for Natives, but, in addition, sums were advanced for farming purposes and for the discharge of existing encumbrances.

The financial transactions of the Board have been maintained and receipts and payments were respectively £107,192 and £128,377 inclusive of transactions undertaken as agent for the Native Trustee. Assets of the Board at the close of the year were:—

	£
Cash balances	1,131
Deposits with Native Trustee	64,524
Mortgages and charges	86,861
Office premises, furniture, &c.	16,366

The net liability to Native beneficiaries at 31st March, 1941, was £97,664, while specific reserves and reserve funds amounted to £65,400.

Native Housing.—In spite of difficulties in acquiring building materials, the available constructional staff has been fully occupied in carrying out the Government's policy of assisting Natives to improve their living-conditions. The Natives are fully alive to and appreciative of the benefits available. Those who have obtained assistance in the past are, in the main, justifying the confidence placed in them by meeting their obligations and generally aspiring to and achieving a standard of living comparable with their pakeha neighbours. Particulars of the work undertaken during the year will be found in the report of the Board of Native Affairs.

Maori Welfare Work.—The staff in general and the field officers in particular have continued to interest themselves in a practical manner in matters appertaining to Native welfare. Several helpful conferences have been held with officers of the Health Department and Child Welfare Department. Particular attention has been focussed on the living-conditions of Natives at Ratana Pa, and it is hoped that, with the co-operation of the Maoris resident there, it may be possible to assist the Health Department in its efforts to improve the position. Efforts towards the establishment of a satisfactory water-supply at Putiki Pa by a connection to the City Council service unfortunately did not materialize, principally due to apathy on the part of the residents of the area. The district is the poorer through the loss by retirement of Judge Browne, whose strong personality, sound judgment, and undoubted knowledge and ability have been the principal factors in establishing the Court and Board in its present sound position. At a valedictory function tendered in his honour, spontaneous tribute was paid to Judge Browne from all quarters in recognition of his distinguished and record period of service to the Department and the Maori race.

Ikaroa and South Island Districts.

Native Land Court.—During the past year twenty-seven sittings of the Court were held at centres of Maori population extending from Hastings in the north to Invercargill in the south. Although the return of business shows a slight decrease on the previous year's figures, a substantial increase in orders, other than succession, trustee, and partition, is recorded. This is a good indication of the increasing tendency on the part of the Natives to avail themselves of the Court's assistance in matters affecting their economic, social, educational, and general welfare.

Numerous applications for assessment of compensation in respect of land taken for public purposes were disposed of during the year. The Court also dealt with a large number of rate-charging applications, granting remissions of whole or part of the amount outstanding where the circumstances warranted such action being taken. Notwithstanding, it has been the constant policy of the Court and the Maori Land Board to impress upon the Natives on every possible occasion that they are under a definite obligation to the community to pay rates.

Assistance is still being rendered to the Lands and Deeds Department in the reconstruction of titles destroyed during the Hawke's Bay earthquake in 1931. Much extra work is involved in the checking and copying of Court orders, together with the preparation of diagrams of the lands concerned.

Alienations confirmed by the Court reveal a decrease in the Ikaroa District, but show a fairly substantial increase in the South Island.

Maori Land Boards.—It is the policy of the Court to order payment of purchase-money, royalties, and rents from confirmed dealings to be made through the appropriate Board, and this has resulted in a steady increase in the amount of work involved in the administration of trust funds.

In addition to their normal functions, the Boards act as agents for the Native Trustee in collecting and distributing revenue from Native reserves in respect of which the annual rent roll is £16,100. Including this sum, the total amount of rents and royalties collected by both Boards during the year was £37,300.

Surplus funds for investment have been used to good advantage in granting loans on mortgage to Natives for farming or housing purposes. At 31st March, 1941, the financial position of the Boards was as follows:

	Ikaroa. £	South Island. £
Total receipts	57,442	12,311
Total disbursements	56,975	11,694
Mortgage and other investments	39,476	7,704
Deposits with Native Trustee	15,691	16,828
Cash balances	4,428	1,695
Liability to Native beneficiaries	53,968	23,310
Reserves	6,268	2,598

Housing.—The office has afforded the Natives every possible assistance in the matter of obtaining suitable building-sites, and to this end has lodged and prosecuted many applications for exchange, partition, and orders under section 20 of the Native Housing Amendment Act, 1938. It has been found possible to provide dwellings for several housing applicants by means of advances from Board and development funds. Owing to the limited amount available in the Special Housing Fund the problem of providing reasonable accommodation for indigent Natives still remains, but, notwithstanding, several loans have been approved in deserving cases.

TABLE A.—RETURN OF NATIVE LAND COURT BUSINESS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH, 1941.

	Totals.		Tokerau.	Waikato- Maniapoto	Wai- riki.	Tairā- whiti.	Aotea.	Ikaroa.	South Island.
	1939-40.	1940-41.							
<i>Native Land Court.</i>									
Number of sittings ..	121	104	8	10	24	20	15	16	11
Number of cases notified ..	26,555	15,467	1,904	1,422	1,800	3,945	2,666	3,207	523
Number of orders made ..	12,006	9,964	640	670	1,128	5,135	1,087	1,100	204
Number of cases dismissed ..	1,829	1,554	129	86	981	158	74	164	62
Number of cases adjourned <i>sine die</i>	17,197	7,601	1,255	886	420	1,211	1,485	2,007	364
Number of partitions made	378	229	23	29	36	98	24	15	4
Area affected (acres) ..	46,833	26,858	2,684	7,997	4,393	7,123	1,967	2,236	458
Number of investigations of title	2	10	..	..	..	9	1	..	..
Area affected (acres) ..	89	386	..	..	..	83	303	..	..
Number of succession orders made	5,956	4,433	361	387	730	1,663	603	552	137
Number of other orders made	5,672	5,292	256	254	362	3,365	459	533	63
<i>Native Appellate Court.</i>									
Number of sittings ..	7	3	1	1	..	..	..	1	..
Number of cases notified ..	13	6	4	1	..	..	..	1	..
Native Land Court decisions varied	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Native Land Court decisions affirmed	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Native Land Court decisions referred back to Native Land Court	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	1	..
Native Land Court decisions annulled	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Appeals dismissed or with- drawn	5	2	1	1	..	..	..	..	..
Appeals adjourned <i>sine die</i> ..	4	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Applications under section 257/31 ordered	..	1	1	..	..	..	..	..	..
Applications under section 257/31 dismissed	..	1	1	..	..	..	..	..	..
Applications under section 257/31 adjourned <i>sine die</i>	3	1	1	..	..	..	..	..	..
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Court and Board fees collected	4,831	4,742	221	575	794	1,350	923	670	209

TABLE B.—RETURN OF ALIENATIONS CONFIRMED FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH, 1941.

Court District.	Leases.*		Sales.		Mortgages.	
	No.	Area.	No.	Area.	No.	Area.
		Acres.		Acres.		Acres.
Tokerau	5	1,568	11	241	..	..
Waikato-Maniapoto	31	2,339	28	1,115	..	..
Waiaiki	32	6,523	12	248	2	11
Tairāwhiti	67	6,376	21	3,360	..	..
Aotea	97	7,318	14	967	..	..
Ikaroa	79	4,547	14	242	..	..
South Island	21	3,184	9	558	1	1,429
Totals	332	31,855	109	6,734	3	1,440

* Includes grants of timber-cutting rights, but not Renewals or Transfers of Leases.

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