

### *Voluntary Organizations*

The Welfare Branch is taking a keen interest in the voluntary social and recreational organizations now established in various centres, and the formation of new clubs is being encouraged. The activities of some of the larger organizations are referred to in the district reports.

## LEGISLATION

Apart from the annual Native Purposes Act, which in 1944 was confined chiefly to internal departmental matters, the Native legislation comprised two Acts which provided for the settlement of two long standing Native claims. The Ngaitahu Claim Settlement Act brought to a conclusion negotiations which have been in progress between the South Island Maoris and successive Governments over a very long period of years. By this Act the Ngaitahu people are to receive the sum of £300,000 in thirty annual payments of £10,000 in full settlement of their claims arising out of the purchase of Canterbury lands in 1848. The first of the annual payments has been lodged with the Native Trustee, to be held pending the reconstitution of the Ngaitahu Trust Board, which will administer the funds on behalf of the beneficiaries.

By the Taranaki Maori Claims Settlement Act, 1944, provision is made for the annual payment, without further appropriation, of a sum of £5,000 to the Taranaki Maori Trust Board in settlement of claims arising out of confiscations imposed after the Taranaki wars. This Act goes a step further than previous legislation, under which it was necessary for the payment to the Taranaki Maori Trust Board to be appropriated by Parliament each year. The Act also provides for the settlement of claims for damages caused to Maori property at Parihaka during its occupation by military Forces in 1881, a sum of £300 being payable to the Taranaki Maori Trust Board in full settlement.

## NATIVE LAND COURT

A statistical return of the activities of the court is appended in Table B. Apart from its judicial operations, the Court has continued to assist the Department in many other directions, such as the investigation of the human and material factors in relation to individual holdings and making recommendations as to suitable occupiers for land under development.

In October, 1944, a Commission of three Judges conducted an inquiry into the rival claims to the Tunapahore Block. This is the sixth occasion on which the title to this block has been investigated since 1885, and the present inquiry was ordered by section 10 of the Native Purposes Act, 1938, to determine the long-standing dispute between the claimants.

The Court now has a full complement of Judges consequent upon the appointment of Mr. Ivor Prichard to the Tokerau District.

## NATIVE APPELLATE COURT

Among the matters dealt with by the Appellate Court were two cases of outstanding importance which were in progress when this report was published last year. These cases concerned the determination of the ownership of Lake Waikaremoana and the bed of the Wanganui River.

In 1918 the Native Land Court made a final order declaring certain Natives to be the owners of the bed of Lake Waikaremoana. Appeals against this decision were lodged by the Crown and by Natives whose claims had been disallowed in 1918. It was contended on behalf of the Crown that the lake-bed was Crown land freed from the Native customary title, and it was arranged between the Crown and the Natives that the Crown appeal should be disposed of first. For various reasons this appeal did not come before the Court until March, 1944, when the Full Court, comprising the six Judges of the Native Land Court sat in Wellington. After hearing preliminary argument as to its jurisdiction, the Court proceeded to hear the Crown appeal, and decision was reserved. On the 20th September, 1944, judgment was delivered, the unanimous decision of the Court being that the lake could be considered as Native customary land and that the Native Land Court had sufficient evidence on which to make freehold orders. The appeal of the Crown was thus disallowed.

In the Wanganui River case the Crown appealed against a preliminary decision of the Native Land Court to the effect that at the time of the making of the Treaty of Waitangi the bed of the river from its tidal limit at Raorikia to its junction with the Whakapapa River was land held by the Natives under their customs and usages. The appeal was heard before the Full Court at Wellington in March and April, 1944, when the preliminary decision of the Native Land Court was upheld.

## NATIVE TRUSTEE

The administration of Native reserves and the estates of deceased Maoris and persons under disability continue to be the chief functions of the Native Trustee. Some 2,016 estates of various types are now administered, and, in addition, 579 estates of deceased Maori servicemen had been dealt with up to the end of the year under review. The total amount held on behalf of estates and beneficiaries as at the 31st March last was £222,935.

Advances from the Common Fund of the Native Trustee have been made on the security of Native land to enable the owners to improve their properties and carry on farming operations. Advances have also been made in respect of the several stations administered by the office under section 25 of the Native Trustee Act, 1930. A detailed report of the year's activities on the Native Trust stations is included in parliamentary paper G.-10.

A number of orders under section 540 of the Native Land Act, 1931, have been made by the Native Land Court during the year. These orders empower the Native Trustee to act as agent for the purpose of leasing lands which are lying idle and becoming infested with noxious weeds, or where an owner cannot be traced. Considerable areas of hitherto idle land have been brought into production in this manner.

Table A of this report contains a summary of the financial position of the Native Trustee as at the 31st March, 1945.