

1924.

## NEW ZEALAND.

DEPARTMENT OF LANDS AND SURVEY.

## PUBLIC DOMAINS OF NEW ZEALAND

(ANNUAL REPORT ON).

*Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.*

SIR,— Department of Lands and Survey, Wellington, 2nd June, 1924.  
I have the honour to report on the public domains of the Dominion for the year ended 31st March, 1924.

During the year fourteen new domains were brought under the provisions of Part II of the Public Reserves and Domains Act, 1908, involving a total area of 474 acres. Boards have been appointed to control eleven of these new areas, and arrangements are in hand for similar appointments in the other three cases. Ten areas, totalling 119 acres, were added to existing domains. This included an area of 105½ acres bequeathed by the late Mr. T. E. Gamble, of Southbridge, as an addition to the Ellesmere Domain.

Domains to the number of 647, comprising a total area of over 73,000 acres, are now administered under Part II of the Act. The Wanganui River Trust Domain, of some 24,000 acres, is, however, included in this total area. The various Commissioners of Crown Lands control fifty-one of these domains, 218 are managed by local authorities acting as Domain Boards, while the remainder are under the control of local Boards appointed from time to time. The system of appointing local Boards adopted by the Department—viz., the nomination of suitable persons by the people concerned—has been found to work very well as a rule; but in certain cases there has been some reason to believe that Boards have been kept rather in the nature of close corporations, and it is intended in future to insist, wherever possible, on public meetings being held when vacancies are being filled or new Boards appointed. It is hoped by this means to ensure the membership of Domain Boards being as fully representative of public opinion as possible.

Three warrants under section 2 of the Public Reserves and Domains Amendment Act, 1921, authorizing charges for admission on fifteen days in a year, were issued during the year; also three warrants under section 4 of the same Act authorizing the erection of halls on public domains.

The Reserves and other Lands Disposal and Public Bodies Empowering Act, 1923, provided legislation dealing with various domain matters. A loan raised by the Mount Wellington Domain Board for the purpose of effecting necessary improvements was validated. Portion of a closed street in the Borough of Hamilton was added to the local domain. The reservation over an area of 7 acres 3 roods 36 perches of the Whaingaroa Domain was cancelled, and the land declared available for disposal under the Land Act, 1908. This particular area contained the Whaingaroa saleyards, which had been established for very many years, and a freehold title was desired by the controlling company. The Whaingaroa Domain itself has an area of over 350 acres, and the withdrawal of the saleyards site will not be detrimental to the value of the reserve for public recreation. Certain stopped streets adjoining the Tauranga Domain were added to the reserve. An area of 1 rood 12 perches of the Paeroa Domain was withdrawn from reservation and vested in the Borough Council for municipal purposes. It is proposed to utilize the land as a site for a fire-brigade station. Authority was provided for the Taihape Borough Council to raise, with the consent of the ratepayers, a special loan not exceeding £4,000 for the purpose of improving and equipping the Taihape Oval Domain, and previous legislation which had been found insufficient to confer the necessary powers was repealed. The reservation over an area of 24 acres 2 roods 30 perches of the Wanganui River Trust Domain was cancelled, and the land declared to be a scenic reserve. The Wanganui River Reserves Commission recommended in 1916 that this particular area should be brought under the provisions of the Scenery Preservation Act, 1908, and the Taumarunui local authorities have lately displayed a lively interest in the preservation of the beautiful bush with which the land is clothed. It was found advisable to cancel the reservation over an area of 5 acres 2 roods 25 perches of the Westport Colliery Reserve,

and to constitute the land a public domain, for which purpose, providing as it does a safe bathing-place, it is eminently suitable. Authority was provided for the cancellation of the reservation over an area not exceeding 1 acre of the Murchison Domain. It is proposed to dispose of this area as a site for the erection of a Young Men's Institute. The reservation was removed over 5 acres 36 perches of the Scotsburn Domain, and the land vested in the Canterbury Education Board as a site for a public school, the Domain Board receiving compensation for the improvements they had made.

The work of administering Part II of the Public Reserves and Domains Act, and the general supervision exercised by the Department over public domains and recreation reserves, grows heavier year by year. It could not be carried out at all without the hearty co-operation of Domain Boards throughout the Dominion, and the good work accomplished by the Board members, often under disheartening conditions, is gratefully acknowledged. These gentlemen give their services freely and generously, their only reward being the knowledge of work accomplished for the welfare and enjoyment of all. While the great majority of Boards are keen and efficient, it is the more regrettable to have to state that some are somewhat lax in the discharge of the duties of their position, and do not seem to realize the responsibilities they have undertaken. Particularly is this noticeable in connection with the annual reports required under section 45 of the Act. It is difficult to obtain these from a good many Boards; but it is hoped they will gradually realize that, both in fairness to themselves, as trustees for the public, and to the Department as the controlling authority, annual reports should be furnished as fully and as promptly as possible.

A question that has caused some concern is that of camping upon public domains. In some localities there seems to be an impression that anybody may camp upon a domain or recreation reserve and build a whare or week-end cottage. The Department is not opposed to camping, under proper restrictions, of course, where the conditions are suitable; but such camping must be in tents or similar non-permanent structures. It is definitely and strongly opposed to the erection of permanent whares, &c., not only because of the fact that such buildings are generally eyesores, but because once permanent buildings are allowed on a domain it becomes only a matter of time before the occupants regard the reserve as their own property, and the general public (to whom the domain in fact belongs) as trespassers on private ground. In some cases, particularly those of large seaside domains, it has been found advisable in the past to obtain special legislation authorizing the setting-apart of portion of the reserves for building purposes; but as a general rule camping should be confined to tents, &c., and should not be encouraged on the average small domain.

The Hon. the Minister of Lands.

I have, &c.,  
J. B. THOMPSON, Under-Secretary.

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