

## BOARD OF NATIVE AFFAIRS.

Established by the Board of Native Affairs Act, 1934-35, this Board succeeded the Native Land Settlement Board, which, constituted in 1932 with the main object of exercising control over expenditure on Native-land-development schemes, absorbed the functions of the Native Trust Board and the Native Land Purchase Board.

The Board of Native Affairs now exercises control over the investments of the Native Trustee, the Maori Land Boards, and the East Coast Commissioner, over the expenditure of all farming operations undertaken by these bodies, and over the development and settlement of Native lands from funds appropriated by Parliament.

## NATIVE-LAND DEVELOPMENT AND ASSISTANCE TO MAORI FARMERS.

The settlement of Native land has for many years been a vexed question, and many and varied have been the attempts to deal with it. The problem has always been a major one, and the departmental report for the year ended 31st March, 1911, drew attention to the effect the passing of the Native Land Act, 1909, as contributing to the elimination of the cry of "unoccupied Native land." This was accomplished, however, by the then policy of encouraging the alienation of Native lands, both to the Crown (for European settlement) and to private persons. The effect of this policy, whilst accelerating land-settlement generally, was to deprive the Native race of its lands and to create a *rentier* class of the non-sellers. It did not solve the problem of those lands which remained in Native occupation, but the provision made for the incorporation of the owners of areas of Native land was of some assistance in enabling them to raise finance for the farming of their lands themselves. Comparatively little use was, however, made of this provision except for the settlement of large holdings as sheep and cattle grazing propositions.

Between 1909 and 1929 two major attempts to meet the difficulty were made—viz., provision for the Maori Land Boards to make advances to Maori farmers and provision for consolidation of Native land titles. Much use was made of the former authority and many Maoris were assisted on their farms, but the available resources were too limited to be of widespread and lasting effect. The consolidation of Native land titles was a preliminary step towards providing the owners with a means of raising farming finance, but a shortage of trained officers necessary to complete this very important and intricate work has retarded progress, and the benefits expected to accrue from this policy are not yet fully demonstrated.

By far the most effective step towards the settlement of Native land is the scheme of Native-land development financed by the State which was inaugurated by section 23 of the Native Land Amendment Act, 1929. This policy has been pushed steadily ahead since that date, and the operations are now so extensive that they are covered by a separate parliamentary paper, G.-10.

## PROMOTION OF EMPLOYMENT AMONGST MAORIS.

When the Unemployment Act, 1930, was passed, the Native race was excluded from its operation, but provision was made for Natives to elect to become contributors to the Unemployment (now Employment Promotion) Fund.

The Natives were slow to take advantage of this provision, but either through force of circumstances or by observation of its operation amongst their pakeha brethren they gradually became more interested, until there are now over thirteen thousand Maoris accepted as contributors to the fund. This procedure is normally a preliminary to registration on the employment register, though some who have become contributors have done so with the object of obtaining subsidies on works carried out on their lands.

From the beginning it has been the policy to place Maori relief-workers on land-development work either on departmental schemes or on lands owned or occupied by Maoris. Much useful work has been accomplished in this direction, and the workers have invariably been employed under contract conditions, thus ensuring greater effort and value for payments made. Since 1930 the sum of £525,300 has been spent under this heading, and an amount of £275,000 will be provided on the estimates for 1937-38.

## GENERAL MAORI WELFARE.

The total Maori population as disclosed by the 1936 census (82,664) is the highest recorded since Native statistics have been kept. The lowest figure (39,854) was recorded in 1896, but, although the earlier census return was only an approximate figure, it can be stated with certainty that there has been an unmistakable increase in population during the last three or four decades.

The gain in population is due in some measure to the interest taken by the Department in co-operation with the health authorities (assisted by the Maori Councils) in the encouragement of and assistance towards better sanitation, hygiene, and water-supplies in pas, the greater use of hospital and obstetrical treatment, and the advice and treatment given by the Native Health Nurses and Native Medical Officers. This Department contributes to the Health Department out of the Civil List the sum of £3,600 for these purposes, and the various Maori Trust Boards assist in a small way by monetary grants. The Native Trustee contributes the sum of £450 towards the salaries of medical officers in the Wellington and Nelson districts out of benefit funds under his control.

The three Maori Trust Boards—Arawa, Tuwharetoa, and Taranaki—are doing good service towards the betterment of the tribes within their districts by utilizing the bulk of their funds for improvements and sanitation of the various pas, the provision of educational facilities, and the general alleviation of distress.