

It is hoped that better arrangements might be made and that greater progress will follow in this work, particularly in those areas where the land security for development requires attention, and in other areas where the people are anxious to get unit-development assistance and make better use of their lands. With better progress in consolidation will also come further advance in development and housing.

Maori Land Board.—There has been no great activity during the year in regard to the Board's vested lands. Most of these areas are under lease and the leases in many cases were renewed some years ago. The Board has continued its routine as distributor of the rentals, and has generally watched the interests of both beneficiaries and lessees whenever necessary. In addition to the vested lands, the Board continues as practically the only rent-distributing agent for other Native lands under lease. The Board in this district, considering it in the interests of all parties to do so, follows a policy of having practically all the proceeds of alienations paid through it.

The Board's finances might yet undergo considerable change, following the handing-over to the Department of the financing of the Te Kao Dairy Scheme, in which the major part of the Board's funds are at present invested. The liability to its beneficiaries as at 31st March, 1937, was £36,072, and this figure is now showing a tendency to reduce, payments to beneficiaries exceeding receipts. The Board has continued to contribute £1,000 per annum towards the general working-expenses of the Department, and with sundry additional expenses meets an annual charge of about £1,400 for administration.

Housing.—For particulars see report of Board of Native Affairs.

General Maori Welfare.—In some of the Native settlements living-conditions show little improvement. Where there is extensive assistance under the development schemes, however, and where houses are being erected, conditions are steadily changing for the better. There is no doubt that living-conditions largely reflect housing conditions; where there is no satisfactory abode, the conditions are almost invariably bad, and can scarcely be expected to be otherwise.

In the health of the northern Native communities there is still much room for improvement. With better housing being steadily supplied, however, and with the helpful co-operation of the Health Department and its officers, it is hoped that there will soon be a general improvement.

The education of the Maori children of the north is improving. The roll number of many of the schools is steadily increasing. This not only reflects the general desire of the people for good schooling for their children, but is also an indication of the steady increase in the Maori population. During the year a good deal of improvement has been made in the district in the way of renovations and additions to Native school buildings, and in some cases new schools have been provided. In these efforts the Education Department has had the co-operation of the Court and the Department's officers generally.

The various Departments concerned all seem now to recognize the efforts that are required in Maori matters in this district which holds one-quarter of New Zealand's Maori population.

WAIKATO-MANIAPOTO DISTRICT.

Native Land Court Activities.—The district of the Court extends approximately from Auckland in the north to Taumarunui in the south.

During the year eleven sittings of the Court were held in Auckland and on circuit at Thames, Ngaruawahia, and Te Kuiti, taking up the major part of the Judge's time. The normal business of the Court was well maintained during the year and involved consideration of applications in all aspects of the Court's jurisdiction. As usual, applications for succession to interests in Native land predominated, whilst a large number of questions involving rates, partitions, alienations, trusteeships, probate, &c., were brought forward for consideration and decision. The number of dealings in Native land has again shown a slight increase.

A large number of matters have been dealt with in Chambers. The Judge of the District has also attended several sittings of the Native Appellate Court.

Consolidation.—In the Maniapoto District various schemes of Consolidation which have been in progress for a number of years have now been completed up to a point where they can be conveniently halted and the necessary orders have been drawn up by the Court. Actual completion of these orders will have to await survey in many instances, whilst in others it is necessary for compiled plans to be obtained. The work is now in a position where all interests affected have been accounted for and is in such a state that the process of consolidation may be recommenced when the time is considered to be opportune.

Parliamentary paper G-10 (1932) sets out at some length the position in the King-country at the time consolidation of interests was launched.

Maori Land Board.—This Board has under its control extensive areas of land which are vested in it under the various provisions of the Native Land Act and of the Native Townships Act. The demand for both farming and township sections has been maintained, and many inspections have been made with a view to determining whether certain areas should be developed for Native occupation or put on the market for open selection.

Arrangements are in hand to offer for lease at an early date all vacant township sections. This involves inspections and in some cases fresh valuations, owing to the deterioration of improvements shown on existing valuations.

The numerous applications under the Mortgagors and Lessees Rehabilitation Act, 1936, are gradually being disposed of by the Commissions. In cases where the Board is interested, inspections have been made by the Lands Department's special committees, and in all cases the co-operation of other State Loan Departments has been obtained in bringing the matters before the Commissions. The disposal of these applications will enable a general overhaul of vested lands and overdue rents, and preparatory work is in hand with this object in view.