

scheme. He does not, however, approve of advancing money to the Natives with the view of enabling them to bid for the leaseholds which are falling in, which is what the Natives desire to do, and which is their right, but a right which is valueless unless they are in a position to pay for the improvements.

It is obvious that the questions above alluded to—viz. : (a) Whether and to what extent leases should be granted to the Native in lieu of licenses at will; (b) whether and to what extent the *papakāinga* land should be redeemed from waste; (c) whether the Native should be assisted to bid for the thirty-year leases as they fall in; (d) whether and to what extent the Public Trustee's suggested scheme of Native associations for farming under European supervision should be adopted—are questions which involve the whole policy of how best to deal with the Native and his lands—that is to say, whether he is to be relegated to the mere position of an idle rent-receiving landlord, or is to be encouraged and helped to become a successful cultivator and useful member of the community; and whether any and what effort should be made to settle the still unleased portions of the various reserves. These are questions which affect not only the areas held under the leases in question, but all the other reserve areas which have not yet been alienated under perpetual lease. There is also a further question arising out of the large increase of rentals shortly to be expected upon revaluation, and that is, whether portions of the increase should or should not be devoted to measures for the improvement of the Natives interested instead of being paid over to them directly.

In the opinion of your Commissioners, these questions should not be left to be dealt with by the Public Trustee alone even if he had sufficient powers, which he has not, to enable him to do so to the full extent suggested. Moreover, he is already too burdened with other duties to supervise schemes of the kind mentioned. In any event, in the opinion of your Commissioners, the administration of those reserves and of the rentals therefrom should be in touch with the Native and Lands Departments, so that a policy consistent with the operations of those Departments as regards Natives generally should be maintained.

The Native Minister is a member of the Public Trust Board, but he never attends its meetings, and, indeed, as already pointed out, the Board does not in practice deal with such questions.

2. As regards all other reserves, special mention must be made of the Nelson and Westland Reserves. The tenants in Greymouth desire to have their tenure changed. We have read their petition presented to Parliament in 1909 and the evidence given thereon as contained in Parliamentary Paper I.—3A. The tenants allege grievances as arising from their existing tenure, but the position is not due in any respect to the Public Trustee, and can only be remedied by the Legislature.

As regards these reserves, the functions of the Public Trustee substantially consist in collecting and distributing the rents of the lands leased, in keeping a record of the changes of ownership, and in consenting to dealings by the tenants. For this work a commission of $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. is deducted from the Native. There has been no suggestion that this work is not well and carefully done, and we found no evidence to the contrary.

The Native reserves other than those of the West Coast Settlement are vested in the Public Trustee under the Native Reserves Act of 1882. Each reserve is held for the purpose for which it was granted or set aside. Where not inconsistent with the trust the Public Trustee has power, with the sanction of the Board specially constituted under that Act, to lease. Where the reserves are for the benefit of the Natives the trust is construed as meaning "the physical, social, moral, or pecuniary benefit of such Natives, including the providing of medical assistance and medicines."

The trusts and duties connected with those reserves are very varied, and in many cases are exceedingly indefinite, making the satisfactory administration a work of difficulty. For an example of the nature of the duties cast on the Public Trustee we may cite the Poukawa Reserves Act, 1910, which im-