

1922.

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, 19th June, 1922.

I have the honour to report on the public domains of the Dominion for the year ended 31st March, 1922.

The domains now administered under Part II of the Public Reserves and Domains Act, 1908, number 625, comprising a total area of 72,711 acres. The Wanganui River Trust Domain, of 24,134 acres, is included in this area. During the year the area of this domain was reduced by some 9,050 acres, and this practically accounts for the decrease from last year's acreage. Of the area removed from the Wanganui River Trust Domain, over 2,000 acres, between Kirikau and the Retaruke River, have been reserved for scenic purposes.

Forty-five domains are controlled by the various Commissioners of Crown Lands, and the remainder by local Domain Boards appointed from time to time.

Eighteen new domains, totalling 320 acres, were constituted during the year and placed under local control. Various domain matters were dealt with in the Reserves and other Lands Disposal and Public Bodies Empowering Act, 1921. The reservation over the Raglan Domain, which had been found unsuitable for recreation purposes, was cancelled, and the land declared Crown land. Another and more suitable area has been secured by the local authority. Authority was granted the Cambridge Domain Board for the erection of a caretaker's residence on that part of the domain known as the Te Koutu Lake Reserve. Arrangements were completed between the Lands, Tourist, and Defence Departments whereby a small portion of the Rotorua Domain was set apart as a drill-shed site in exchange for the old site, which was added to the domain. Portion of the Ongarue Domain was found unsuitable for recreation, being much cut up by small streams and gullies. The reservation over this area was accordingly removed, and steps are now being taken to set aside a suitable area in the township to take its place. Provision was made to enable the Ohawe Domain Board to expend portion of its funds in furnishing a water-supply to the beach and bathing-sheds in the vicinity of the domain. An area of 1 acre of the South Rakaia Domain was vested in the Ashburton Hospital Board for a site for a hospital. All moneys received by the Onehunga Borough Council in respect of the Onehunga and Mount Smart Domains were declared a common fund available for expenditure as if both reserves were parts of the one domain. The Kaiapoi Domain was vested in the Kaiapoi Borough Council for municipal purposes on condition that not less than 30 acres should be set aside for recreation. Authority was granted for the sale of the Rhodes Park Domain, which has been found inadequate for the needs of the district, and the acquisition of a more suitable area. Provision was made allowing the Courtenay Domain Board to grant financial assistance to the Kirwee Domain Board. The Courtenay Domain is not used to any great extent, and the funds which have accumulated could be more profitably utilized in the improvement of the Kirwee Domain, which is largely used for sports and games. As little interest has been shown in the Bastings Domain, steps were taken to cancel the reservation and declare the area Crown land available for disposal under the Land Act, 1908.

Some important provisions are contained in the Public Reserves and Domains Amendment Act, 1921. The use of public domains for various sports, games, &c., has been in the past somewhat handicapped by the fact that there was no power to levy admission charges, and it has been felt for some time that in the best interests of sport some such power should be provided. By section 3 of the amending Act above referred to those provisions of section 29 of the Public Reserves and Domains Act, 1908, under which charges for admission to recreation-grounds may be made on ten days in

any year are extended to public domains; and, further, the power conferred by section 2 of the amending Act on the Governor-General to increase the number of days on which charges may be made for admission to public reserves to fifteen days in any year may also be exercised in respect of any public domain.

Section 4 provides that portion of a public domain may be, by warrant, set apart for a hall-site; and the Governor-General may also authorize a Domain Board to erect a public hall on part of the domain under its control. It is considered that in the country districts especially this will meet a long-felt want, and will enable the domains to prove of greater service to the community.

Under the authority of section 7, regulations may be made by Order in Council for the exclusion of undesirable persons from public domains.

A perusal of the annual reports furnished by the controlling Boards again serves to show that the great majority of domains are being well administered in the interests of the public. Lack of funds has prevented most Boards from effecting any extensive new works during the year; but existing improvements have been well maintained, chiefly by voluntary labour. A feature of the last two years has been the number of war memorials erected on public domains. It is fitting that these dignified tributes to the memory of our soldiers should be placed on the reserves that have been set apart for the use and enjoyment of our people, and it is certain that to the rising generation they will prove a lasting reminder of the highest and manliest duties of citizenship.

I have, &c.,

J. B. THOMPSON, Under-Secretary.

The Hon. D. H. Guthrie, Minister of Lands.

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