

The improvement and extension of educational facilities for Maori children in the North, which was the subject of comment in last year's report, continues to have gratifying results.

One of the major problems in this district is the shortage of suitable farming areas for that section of Natives who are without landed interests. With the increasing Maori population, other avenues of employment will require to be found and steps taken to ensure that the coming generation of Maoris is given training and education which will enable it to be absorbed into the industrial and general life of the Dominion.

### *Waikato-Maniapoto District.*

*Native Land Court.*—This Court district extends approximately from Auckland in the north to Taumarunui in the south. The usual sittings of the Court have been held during the year at Auckland, and on circuit at Ngaruawahia, Te Kuiti, and Thames. In order to expedite the conduct of the business of the Court an increased number of sittings were held in the circuit towns and, in addition, many matters have been dealt with in Chambers. The number of applications dealt with shows an increase over that of last year, and, of these, succession orders comprised a substantial portion of the Court's business. Applications for partition are not as numerous as in the past, and those received now are usually for some special purpose related, for example, to proposed alienations or development or housing advances. Orders for probate, exchange, and roading were prominent amongst those dealt with during the year under review, as well as applications by local bodies for charging orders under the Rating Act. These latter statutory applications impose in some cases a difficult duty upon the Court in view of the desire of local authorities to preserve the right to payment of rates due as against the undoubted difficulties of Native owners in meeting local taxation. In a large number of cases charging orders have been granted.

The Court has been called upon to deal with an increased number of applications for confirmation of alienation of Native lands. These necessitate most careful inquiry into the circumstances of the alienors, and, having regard to the necessity for conserving in Native ownership sufficient lands to meet the future needs of the people, the Court has exerted its influence in the direction of creating a desire among the owners to work their own lands and has, through the operations of the Maori Land Board, financed many deserving cases to this end.

*Consolidation.*—In accordance with a decision dictated largely by lack of available specialized staff, consolidation of titles is not at present being proceeded with in this district. There is no demand by Native owners for schemes on an extensive scale, but in several instances circumstances have arisen where strictly limited consolidation would clarify titles and assist in the solution of local problems due to unsatisfactory tenures.

*Maori Land Board.*—The Board has under its control extensive areas of land which are vested in it by statute as trustee for the beneficial owners. A complete review of all vacant Native township sections has been undertaken during the year and all available sections have been offered for lease by tender.

In most cases applications under the Mortgagors and Lessees Rehabilitation Act, 1936, have been finally disposed of, and during the year every effort has been made to place the collection of rents upon a more satisfactory basis. In the majority of instances lessees have co-operated with the Board in an endeavour to reduce arrears and maintain current rent payments.

During the year under review the Board has collected considerable sums by way of rents, royalties, and purchase-money. In all cases where purchase-money is substantial it is the practice of the Court to order that the money be held by the Board under the provisions of section 281 of the Native Land Act, 1931. Moneys so held are either invested or disbursed for approved purposes.

The finances of the Board are buoyant, with a large proportion of liquid assets readily available to meet the requirements of beneficiaries. The total amount received by the Board during the year on account of beneficiaries was £39,118, while the total amount distributed to beneficiaries was £39,134. The cash on hand or at call as at the 31st March, 1939, amounted to £46,134.

*Housing.*—The improvement of the housing-conditions of indigent Maoris continues to call for the attention of the Board. The Native Department's administration of the Native housing legislation and of the Special Housing Fund established thereunder necessitates the co-operation of both the Board and the Court with regard to such matters as sites, charging orders, and assignment of rents and royalties, &c.

The general housing programme in this district has been satisfactorily maintained, and this activity is the subject of more detailed reference in the report of the Board of Native Affairs.

*General Maori Welfare.*—While the Court has not come intimately into contact with the people in their own homes, personal observation and reports received from its officers lead to the conclusion that the improved economic conditions of the people over the past few years have had a very beneficial effect upon the health of the Natives, particularly children. School attendances appear to have improved, and there has been an absence of epidemics of a severe nature.

Various problems still remain without final solution, but progress is being made, and the virility of the race and the influence of its leaders will, it is considered, eventually solve many of these difficulties, particularly with the aid of land development, housing, education, health services, and the training of Maori youths in useful occupations. It is noteworthy that, where housing assistance is given, the people usually respond by keeping the new dwellings in a wholly creditable manner. The tendency of some Natives to excessive indulgence in alcoholic liquor is less marked than in the past, and the entire weight of the influence of departmental officers has been to discourage drinking amongst the Maori people.

A great deal remains to be done, however, towards the education of the majority of the people in the appreciation of the benefits of correct living and the prudent expenditure of money.