

STAFF.

As at the 31st March, 1942, the personnel of the Department, including 6 Judges of the Native Land Court, totalled 558 officers, comprising office staff (251 permanent and 194 temporary) and field staff (19 permanent and 94 temporary). In addition, the Department has on its pay-roll 140 men who are employed on a weekly-wage basis as stockmen, shepherds, truck-drivers, and general farm hands. These figures include 167 officers serving with the forces on active service or engaged on home defence, and their temporary replacement by a considerable number of wartime assistants, principally female clerks. It should be mentioned that 20 per cent. of the departmental personnel (excluding farm employees) are members of the Maori race. The deepest sympathy is tendered to the relatives of four valued officers who have made the supreme sacrifice in the present conflict, and the Department expresses the sincere hope that other members of its staff reported missing are safe, and that the wounded will speedily recover.

DISTRICT REPORTS.

The following reports on departmental operations relate to the different districts.

WAIKATO-MANIAPOTO AND TOKERAU DISTRICTS.

The Auckland office controls the activities of both these districts—the Waikato-Maniapoto extending from Auckland to Taumarunui in the south, and the Tokerau embracing the whole of the North Auckland Peninsula with its heavy Maori population. The various Court and Board activities have been maintained, although war conditions, and consequent staffing difficulties, have impeded progress in certain directions.

Native Land Court.—Apart from the gazetted sittings of the Courts, sittings have been held in various centres as required and many *ex parte* matters have been dealt with that are not reflected in Table A. Since the last report, Judge Beechey has taken over the work of the Waikato-Maniapoto District.

Consolidation.—The consolidation schemes in the Tokerau District are making good progress, a committee having been appointed to assist the Court. The Committee is at present working on the Hokianga series.

Housing.—Native housing activities in both districts have been well maintained, but a shortage of certain materials and increased costs is having the effect of slowing down building operations. Repayments have been, for the most part, satisfactory, and reports show that occupiers are appreciating and responding to better housing conditions. Demand for housing assistance continues to exceed supply. At Pukekohe seven houses have been completed and tenanted, and a further four houses are nearing completion and will be occupied very shortly.

Maori Land Boards.—In the Waikato-Maniapoto District Maori Land Board a number of Native township leases have come due for renewal, and in nearly all cases the lessees have elected to renew. There has also been a fair demand for vacant Native township sections.

The finances of the Waikato-Maniapoto District Maori Land 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 £19,797, while the total distributed to beneficiaries was £13,172. The cash on hand or at call as at 31st March, 1942, amounted to £41,524. The Waikato-Maniapoto Board invested £5,000 of its funds in Bomber Bonds.

The Tokerau District Maori Land Board has continued its function as distributor to the owners of the revenue from vested lands and is also the main rent-distributing agent for other Native lands under lease. Several large timber sales have taken place during the year, and the owners have by resolution devoted much of the proceeds to tribal and patriotic purposes. The Tokerau Board has continued to contribute £1,000 per annum towards general administration expenses of the Department, and with sundry additional expenses meets an annual charge of approximately £1,400 for administration.

WAIARIKI DISTRICT.

Native Land Court.—During the year there were twenty-four gazetted sittings of the Court, and apart from the usual volume of business numerous matters have been attended to by the Judge in Chambers. The number of orders have shown a slight increase on the previous year's activities. However, the number of applications lodged has shown a sharp decline, reflecting as it does in the amount of fees received. The Natives maintain a keen interest in the proceedings and it is evident that the Court holds the confidence and respect of the Maori people.

Consolidation.—Preliminary measures have been made to build up a consolidation staff so that urgent consolidation matters may be proceeded with, and it is hoped in the coming year to push on and complete as soon as possible those consolidation schemes affecting the Taheke and Horohoro areas. The data and group lists are being checked and examined prior to any field-work being commenced.

Maori Land Board.—The financial activities of the Board have increased, receipts for the year being £54,826 and payments totalling £43,293. As at 31st March, 1942, the financial position of the Board was as follows:

	£
Liability to Native beneficiaries	84,604
Cash balances	15,039
On deposit with Native Trustee	37,990
Invested in farming properties	73,208
Invested on mortgage	5,882
Invested in primary-production activities	7,248

Housing.—Owing to shortage of materials and labour, it has not been possible to carry on with any building programme, and at the present time a great many applications for housing assistance, though urgent and necessary, cannot proceed. Improved living conditions are reflected in the health of those provided with housing accommodation, and it is hoped that a return to normal conditions will enable this phase of the Department's activities to be soon resumed.

Primary Production.—In response to the Government's appeal for the growing of more maize, the Maori people of the coastal districts from Tauranga to the Cape made a very fine effort and, financed by the Board, produced some 26,000 sacks (91,000 bushels) of maize in the 1940-41 year. Approximately the same area was sown for harvesting in the 1941-42 year, but owing to the drought