

SUMMARY.

The principal works carried out during the period of eleven months from 1st April, 1942, to 28th February, 1943, are summarized below:—

	Miles.	Ch.	Excavation. Cubic Yards.
Drains cleaned by manual labour	126	25	..
Drains cleaned by weed-cutting launch	7	29	..
Drains widened and deepened by manual labour	1	34	1,305
Drains and canals improved with excavators	3	66	70,883
Stop-banks, rivers, and streams improved with excavators			
Stone used for training-wall and floodgate protection		..	2,500
River-bank cleared of willows with tractor	0	27	..
Bridges constructed—			No.
Permanent (25 ft. span)		..	.. 1
Temporary (135 ft. span)		..	.. 1
Rates struck—			£
Special		..	10,435
General		..	5,986
Rates collected—			
Special		..	13,869
General		..	7,905

NATIVE RATING.

The problem of Native-rate collection is one that is causing great concern to rating authorities in the North Island. A scheme which is in operation in part of the Waiariki Maori Land District has proved to be most successful, and brief details of the system which was instituted, and the results as it affects this Department, are of interest.

In the Rangitaiki Drainage District there are approximately four hundred Native properties, on which the annual drainage rates amount to nearly £1,900. Up to 31st March, 1939, collections were practically nil and the Native arrears at that date were over £14,000. Charging orders had been obtained, but the position was becoming progressively worse, and in many individual cases the arrears of rates greatly exceeded the value of the land.

Attempts to enforce the charging orders by the appointment of a Receiver naturally raised strong protests from the Natives, and it was evident that the wholesale leasing of land would be detrimental not only to the Natives, but to the authorities themselves. Even had it been practical to lease the lands in order to meet rate arrears, there would be the danger that current rates would accumulate and the same difficulties would again arise in a few years.

Following a conference between the interested parties, it was unanimously agreed that the main object was to stem the tide of rising charges on Native lands—to inculcate the habit of paying current rates when due. With this in view, the rating authorities agreed to write off one year's arrears for each year of current rates paid. The representatives of the Native ratepayers realized that this was a most generous offer, and they gratefully accepted it. A Collector was appointed, and he is doing excellent work not only in collecting Native rates, but in obtaining necessary information regarding sections and occupiers. The total Native drainage rates paid since the scheme was instituted amounts to £5,300. For the years 1939–40, 1940–41, and 1941–42 approximately 80 per cent. of the Native rates levied have been collected. Such an excellent response would not have been possible without the co-operation of the Native Land Court, the Native Department, the Whakatane County Council, the Collector, and the Natives themselves. The thanks of the Department are due to the parties concerned.

I have, &c.,
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The Under-Secretary for Lands, Wellington.

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS.

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