

A phase of the Department's activities referred to in parliamentary paper G.—10 which is worthy of some further mention in this report, impinging as it does on the welfare of a large section of the Maori people, is that of the efforts being made to encourage and establish commercial fruit and flower growing, vegetable-production, and the intensive cultivation of land for the production of crops yielding returns of high value for the small area of land used. The constant aim of the Department is to find the means of absorbing the increasing Maori population into industry in congenial surroundings and in conditions suitable to their way of life. The utilization of their land in small holdings appears well calculated to absorb the greatest number of Maoris in industries promising an economic return which does not call for the movement of the Maori population from rural to urban areas.

The scope of the general administration of the many aspects of Native affairs during the year under review has been well maintained, and, indeed, the Department has extended its sphere of operations in meeting some of the social and moral problems which have been accentuated under war conditions. Useful liaison work has been effected with the particular Government Departments and organizations concerned in promoting the general welfare of the Maori people. It is hoped that this co-operation may be extended to the full in the participation by the Maori race in general and the Native administration in particular in the future development and expansion which will follow the restoration of peace. The Department should secure useful liaison with and be enabled to contribute to special aspects of post-war planning through its representation on the Personnel and the Agriculture Committees of the newly established Organization for National Development.

The Australian - New Zealand Agreement

It is significant and worthy of emphasis herein that four important clauses of the forty-one embodied in the Australian - New Zealand Agreement made on 21st January, 1944, relate to the welfare and social, economic, and political development of Native peoples of the Pacific, through application of the doctrine of "trusteeship." To facilitate collaboration and secure a common policy in regard to health services, communications, and matters of Native education, anthropological investigation, production, and material development generally, the promotion of a South Seas Regional Commission is envisaged, on which body New Zealand, with its experience under an enlightened policy of Native administration, could contribute much that would be invaluable to the investigations and deliberations of that body.

Population

The Maori population has again increased, from 95,800 in December, 1942, to 98,300 a year later; while the latest estimate at 31st March, 1944, was 98,860, representing a 148-per-cent. increase over the three or four decades since 1896, when the census was 39,854. Thus, including the Maoris serving overseas with the Armed Forces, the number of Maoris is just over 100,000, or 6 per cent. of New Zealand's population. To-day a problem facing statesmen and administrators, as far as the Maori is concerned, is the provision not for a declining race, but for a virile and rapidly increasing race.

Staff

At 31st March, 1944, the personnel of the Department, including 5 Judges of the Native Land Court, numbered 568 officers, comprising office staff (244 permanent and 212 temporary) and field staff (18 permanent and 89 temporary). Included in these figures are 167 men in the Armed Forces either overseas or in New Zealand, and their replacement by 82 wartime assistants (principally female clerks). Nine officers were seconded for duty with other Departments for the duration of the war. In addition, the Department has on its pay-roll some 130 men (chiefly Maoris) who are employed on a weekly-wage basis as stockmen, shepherds, truck-drivers, and general farm hands, but it should be mentioned that the bulk of the labour on the land-development and housing operations is secured by engaging Maoris on co-operative contracts. Approximately 25 per cent. of the departmental personnel (excluding farm employees)—i.e., 140—are members of the Maori race.

To the relatives and close friends of the twelve members of the staff who were reported as killed on military duties the Government and fellow-officers of the Department extend their heart-felt sympathy, as also do they sincerely hope that others of the staff reported missing are safe, and that the wounded will speedily recover.

Retirements.—There were two retirements on superannuation during the year: Mr. Owen N. Campbell, Under-Secretary and Native Trustee, retired on 29th February after forty-three years' service. Serving first in the Lands and Survey Department, he held successively the positions of Chief Land Drainage Engineer, Commissioner of Crown Lands, Chief Surveyor, Commissioner of Small Farms, and Deputy Under-Secretary; then in May, 1935, he was appointed Permanent Head of the Native Department. Pervading the eulogistic tributes paid to him at a large representative farewell gathering was the spirit of appreciation for his record of accomplishment and personal service. On 31st December, 1943, Judge F. O. V. Acheson retired after completing forty years' service, some twenty-four years of which was spent on the Native Land Court Bench. From the position of Native Land Purchase Officer, he was elevated to the Bench in 1919, being first stationed in the Aotea District with headquarters at Wanganui, and later transferring to the Tokerau District in 1924, where he was also President of the Tokerau District Maori Land Board until his retirement.