

was reached. The Armed Forces provided a steady demand for primary produce, while now the dehydrating factories are taking a proportion of all crops.

The collection of the valuable seaweed agar, originally started in the Bay of Plenty area, was continued. A recent official report shows that between June, 1942, and April, 1944, some 53 tons of the seaweed, valued at £5,771, were collected by the Maori people in the Bay of Plenty. Despite previous concern as to the effect of the impact of seaweeding activities on Maori farms, present indications are that nowadays the gathering of the weed in this district has caused no distraction from dairying activities, but has resulted in the utilization of the proceeds from farms in the improvement and betterment of homes.

Tairāwhiti District (Gisborne)

Native Land Court.—The diversity of work which is called for continues unbounded and it is by no means confined solely to those matters for which a Court order is ultimately made. The Maori people are prone to bring their troubles and hardships to the Department for whatever advice and assistance is available, and it is apparent that the Court holds their confidence and good will. During the year there were twenty-two sittings of the Court in centres from Wairoa to Te Araroa and the volume of business showed a slight increase upon that of the previous twelve months. For the most part the increase is accounted for by the regrettably large number of probate and personalty orders necessary to wind up the estates of so many deceased soldiers who have paid the supreme sacrifice during the present war.

Three sittings of the Native Appellate Court were held in the district during the year to hear a total of nine appeals; six were dismissed, two referred back to the lower Court, and one adjourned.

Every facility and full co-operation is given local bodies to assist them in collecting rates owing on Native lands. The policy is reflected in the continued decline from 1,491 for the previous year to 784 this year in the number of charging orders applied for by certain local bodies, which, incidentally, report record collections of Maori rates. Some 45 receivership orders, previously granted by the Court for the purpose of enforcing charges for rates, were discharged, the receivers having fulfilled the purposes for which they were appointed; 22 new orders were issued during the year.

The number of alienations is practically on a par with previous years, and it is to be remarked that, while the bulk of the confirmations have been of leases, many of the alienees have been Maoris, thus showing a keen desire on their part to acquire and resume occupation of their ancestral lands, a desire undoubtedly heightened by the facilities made available for development by the Department.

Consolidation.—Progress is still being made in the Northern Waiapu Consolidation Scheme, the major portion of which is still to be completed.

Maori Land Board.—The Tairāwhiti Board responded to the call for more production, and advances totalling nearly £3,000 for cultivation of kumara, potato, and maize crops were made to the Maoris; the results were very satisfactory. Donations amounting to £135 were made during the past twelve months to help the Maori social and patriotic efforts, including a grant to the Te Moana Ngarimu V.C. Fund. Investments in Government securities are now £73,528, this figure being 44 per cent. of the Board's total investments. The balance consists mainly of advances on mortgages for Maori farming and housing propositions.

Aotea District (Wanganui)

Native Land Court.—There were fifteen sittings of the Court, which visited Hawera, New Plymouth, Taumarunui, and Tokaanu. The volume of business transacted during the period under review was well maintained, notwithstanding the difficulties arising from the war. Some forty-three orders, subject to the approval of the Board of Native Affairs, were made vesting in the Maoris approximately 42,000 acres of land owned by the Crown in the Tokaanu District. In return the Crown has been vested in tracts of Maori-owned land situated principally on the slopes of Tongariro, Pihanga, and Kakaramea. The exchanges, while preserving to the Crown what remains of the timber lands on these mountain slopes, will have the effect of making available to the Maoris of the district an additional area for development when labour and materials are available.

One sitting of the Native Appellate Court was held in the district, when three cases were heard.

There was a marked increase in the number of applications for confirmation of alienations. In considering these applications the Court maintains the practice of investigating each case exhaustively and refusing confirmation unless it can be established that the alienation is in the interests of the Maori owners. Consideration is also given by the Court during the course of these inquiries to the possibilities of the owners themselves, with the assistance that can readily be made available by the Department, utilizing the land in question, thereby becoming primary producers and economic units.

Applications for confirmation of sales of lands are not encouraged by the Court, as unless it can be established that a sale of land will not render vendors landless, and that the proceeds of a sale can be utilized in bettering their living conditions, the Court in general refuses to confirm. Where a sale of land is confirmed and the proceeds are substantial, the Court usually directs that such proceeds be paid to the Board for