

atisfactory. Whereas previously only £100, or thereabouts, was collected annually, in four days the two officers concerned collected an amount of over £800 in cash and orders on dairy cheques and maize. This amount represented the outstanding drainage and county rates. As an outcome of this, the Whakatane County Council and the Lands and Survey Department appointed Mr. A. O. Stewart, of Whakatane, on trial for a period of six months as Maori Rate Collector. The result speaks for itself. Seven years have now elapsed and Mr. Stewart still retains that position.

During the past year, in spite of reduced crops owing to exceptionally dry conditions, nearly 87 per cent. of the rates struck by the County Council in respect of Maori-owned lands were collected and over 99 per cent. of the land-drainage rates were paid. Outstanding rates due to the County Council have been reduced from £18,058 to £7,935 in the last seven years. As a result of Mr. Stewart's operations it has been possible for the Native Land Court to dismiss approximately 3,000 applications for rate-charging orders, thus effecting a very considerable saving of time and expense.

Maori Land Board

The camping and farming project sponsored by the Board on the shores of Lake Rotoiti has been further developed. An automatic pump has been installed to drain a swamp adjacent to the lake; and there is every indication of adding further valuable area to the farm property. During the holiday period quite a number of campers occupied the camping area and provided an added market for fresh milk, fruit, and vegetables to the extent of £125.

The primary-production drive is being continued and approximately 1,200 acres of maize were planted throughout the district, mainly in the Tauranga area. Early potatoes, onions, and kumara have been grown and marketed in increasing volume.

The past year saw the inauguration of the farm contracting scheme. This scheme has proved of great help to Maori farmers and croppers, in view of the general labour shortage. The aim has been to keep hire charges as low as possible; but the fixed tractor charge of 12s. 6d. per hour has resulted in a small loss for the year's operations. The tractors have worked 4,400 useful hours. The hire charge will be increased slightly for the next year's workings.

The Board now owns four tractors and a number of cultivating and cropping implements. These machines have been used on development schemes for general farming purposes and on cropping schemes for the production of maize, kumara, potatoes, and onions. This machinery made possible the growing of 1,200 acres of maize on Matakana Island and on the mainland. An angle dozer fitted to one of the tractors has been most useful in forming and maintaining roads on development-scheme lands. The greater part of the cultivation, planting, and harvesting on scheme lands is now done with the Board's machinery, and it will no doubt play a big part in future development work.

Distribution of rents, royalties, &c., to beneficiaries' personal accounts has been hindered by a shortage of staff, with the result that the liability to beneficiaries has increased by £13,700.

The Board of Native Affairs was again able to reduce the debt owing on Tihiotonga Station to the Waiariki Board by transferring £2,614 18s. from the year's profits.

Consolidation

Satisfactory progress has been made during the year, despite the demands of other activities and the shortage of trained staff in this work. At present the consolidation staff consists of one officer, and his time is devoted solely to the Koutu area. When completed this scheme will provide approximately four hundred quarter-acre building-sites, with the requisite road access and reserves laid out on modern lines by Mr. J. W. Mawson, Town Planning Officer of the Ministry of Works. Several houses are already being constructed under the Native Housing Act on locations approved by the Court.