

The housing of the Maori people and the development and settlement of their lands are both responsible for a sharp increase in the business of the Maori Land Court in the partitioning of lands or the vesting of suitable areas in individual owners for the purpose of house-sites, and generally invoking the machinery of the Court in clarifying and simplifying land titles for housing and land-development purposes.

The Department has made a particular feature of the revival of Maori cultural life and the provision of means for the improvement of the social life of the Maori people. In carrying out the policy of Government in these respects community centres, hostels, and other amenities have been encouraged and assisted financially in some cities and larger towns. The latest projects in this respect are the Maori Community Centre in Auckland City, where the most gratifying interest in the aims and objects of the institution has been taken by both Maori and pakeha citizens alike. In Rotorua a large guest-house, at present nearing completion, will provide a long-felt want in that town. This enterprise is more particularly referred to later in this report.

My general observations have persuaded me that the Maori race are taking advantage of the services provided by the Government and the Department for their general social and economic betterment. They discern the material progress that they will make as a people and as citizens of the Dominion in taking a full part in its social and economic life, and in assuming the rights, duties, and obligations of citizenship with the like opportunities for progress available to the rest of the community.

LEGISLATION

The principal feature in the Maori Purposes Act, 1947 was the substitution of the term "Maori" for "Native." This change, which affects all statutes, regulations, by-laws, deeds, and other official documents, has been widely welcomed by the Maori people.

The Act also provided for the return of the Mangatu Nos. 1, 3, and 4 Blocks to the Maori owners and for the incorporation of the owners. For a number of years these blocks have been administered by the East Coast Commissioner for the purpose of reducing heavy liabilities which had been incurred in respect of the land. These liabilities having been reduced to reasonable proportions, the time was considered opportune for the revesting of the blocks. A committee of management is now farming the land for the benefit of the incorporated owners.

The remainder of the Act was principally concerned with matters of local or departmental significance.

MAORI LAND CLAIMS

Following upon the settlement of some of the larger claims in respect of long-standing grievances, the Government has decided to investigate thoroughly a number of other claims which have been outstanding for some considerable time. It is considered that a full examination of the facts of each case by a competent tribunal is the first essential in any endeavour to remove the sense of grievance under which some sections of the Maori people have been suffering. The final settlement of all claims which prove to be justified will be an important factor in the future relationships between the two races.

In addition to the surplus-lands claims mentioned in last year's report, several other claims have been referred to the Royal Commission set up under the chairmanship of the Right Hon. Sir Michael Myers, P.C., G.C.M.G., with Mr. Hanara Reedy and Mr. Albert Samuel as members. The position of these inquiries as at the end of the year is set out hereunder, together with a brief note on certain compensation claims in the Taupo district which are to be investigated by Sir Harold Johnston as Commissioner.