

MAORI TRUSTEE

A partial decentralization of vested reserves to the Registrars of the Maori Land Courts at Wellington and Wanganui which took place some years ago has now been followed by complete decentralization in terms of section 3 of the Maori Purposes Act, 1945, and in September, 1947, delegation to the respective Registrars at Wellington, Wanganui, Rotorua, Gisborne, and Auckland was effected. With some limitations, all the powers, functions, and duties of the Maori Trustee conferred or imposed by any statute, deed, will, or other instrument have been delegated, subject to the direction, supervision, and control of the Maori Trustee.

By reason of centralized control the activities of the Maori Trustee had been confined principally to the Wellington Province and adjacent districts, but the establishment of a more widespread organization should make available to the Maori people in all districts the facilities provided for them under the Maori Trustee Act, 1930. This will also enable the departmental officers concerned to make personal contact with, and to gain a closer knowledge of the beneficiaries, which should result in better service to them.

While it is still too early to gauge the increase in business following decentralization, it is noted that 139 new estates were accepted to 31st March, the total number under administration at that date being 1,405.

MORTGAGE INVESTMENTS

The sum of £326,034 from the Common Fund is invested in mortgage securities and stations controlled by the Maori Trustee (further reference to this having been made in parliamentary paper, G-10). Much Maori land is to-day subject to Part I of the Maori Land Amendment Act, 1936, and finance for farming purposes under that Act is provided by the Board of Maori Affairs. However, some eighteen advances on mortgage were granted by the Maori Trustee during the year ended 31st March, 1948, principally for the farming or housing purposes of Maori borrowers. The majority of these loans were made to Taranaki people, where the Maori Trust Office is better known by virtue of its control of the West Coast Settlement Reserves.

MAORI RESERVES

Those valuable lands reserved to the Maori people under the Maori Reserves Act and the West Coast Settlement Reserves Act and vested in the Maori Trustee, comprise—

	Acres.	
West Coast Settlement Reserves (Taranaki)	72,000	
Greymouth (Town)	500	
North Island Tenth (Wellington City)	38	
Palmerston North (City)	71	
South Island Tenth (Nelson City and Motueka)	4,200	
Other North Island Reserves	4,000	
Other South Island Reserves	13,500	

The Trust imposed on the Maori Trustee is an important one, and the heritage which the beneficial owners have had handed down to them should be carefully preserved. The annual rent roll approaches £50,000, and much consideration has been given in the past year to the assessment of the owners' interest in respect of leased lands so that the full rental value will be available to them.