

A Royal Commission was set up in August, 1947, for the purpose of inquiring into and reporting on the operation of the law relating to the assessment of rentals under leases of the West Coast settlement reserves in Taranaki. A total of 474 leases, comprising an area of 71,643 acres, were involved in the investigations, which affect some 4,272 Maori beneficial owners in the reserves. The Commission has now reported its findings.

In addition to thirteen ordinary sittings of the Court during which over two thousand cases were notified for hearing, a special sitting was held at Jerusalem, on the Wanganui River, for the purpose of arriving at a mutually satisfactory method of dealing with the housing problem in the settlement. As a result, arrangements have been finalized for the construction of houses and the provision of suitable water and sanitary schemes.

The alteration in the level of Lake Taupo has injuriously affected certain lands bordering on the lake, and, in accordance with the Lake Taupo Compensation Claims Act, 1947, a Special Compensation Court was set up for the purpose of hearing various claims for compensation for loss arising out of the alteration in the lake-level. This Court held sittings at Rotorua, Tokaanu, and Taupo in October and November, 1947, when a total of 404 claims were dealt with. Of these, 163 claims affecting the Aotea district were withdrawn, 17 were rejected, and 89 were settled by agreement between the parties. Compensation amounting to £35,800 was awarded, and of this, £26,105 representing compensation in respect of Maori land in the Aotea district has been paid to the Board on behalf of the claimants.

Decentralization of the work of the Maori Trust Office has been responsible for an increase in the work of the Office and the administration of approximately four hundred estates was transferred during the year.

The leasing and control of the West Coast Settlement Reserves and the distribution of rents on behalf of the Maori Trustee is an important function. Regular inspections of lands leased or mortgaged are carried out and a full time field officer has been assigned to this important work.

A grant of £10 10s. was made towards the funds of the Tuberculosis Association.

IKAROA (WELLINGTON DISTRICT) AND SOUTH ISLAND

An area of land in Otaki, 4 acres in extent, is being used for the purpose of establishing a nursery from which Maori market-gardeners may draw supplies of flower and vegetable plants, fruit and shelter trees, &c., for the purpose of supplying the ready vegetable and flower markets near at hand.

In the Hutt Valley a number of houses are being erected at Waiwhetu for those people who were displaced when the land there was taken for housing, and some of these homes are now ready for occupation.

There were seventeen sittings of the Court in the Ikaroa district and ten in the South Island district, and also three sittings of the Appellate Court. The Court returns indicate that in the Ikaroa district there was a sharp increase in work during the year. In the South Island district the number of cases notified for hearing was the largest since separate records have been kept.

Numerous partition orders and vesting orders under section 7 of the Maori Purposes Act, 1941, were made for the purpose of providing housing sites for those requiring homes.

The Maori Land Board has purchased a D4 Caterpillar tractor for use on development schemes, and this machine is hired out as required for development purposes.

Three grants of timber-cutting rights, involving an area of 1,166 acres in the South Island district, have been granted.