

In respect of the West Coast Settlement Reserves (Taranaki) a good deal of work has devolved on the Maori Trust Office since the passing of the West Coast Settlement Reserves Amendment Act, 1948. Under this Act, something like 430 of the leases of portions of the reserves were cancelled as from 1st January, 1948. The lessees have the right to elect to take new leases from that date at rentals based on the unimproved values of the areas as fixed by special Government valuations or at a minimum rent which is provided for in the statute. A good deal of research work was necessary for the purpose of acquiring information for the Valuation Officers.

The Maori Trustee is responsible, among other things, for the administration of the Maori Trustee's Common Fund and special investments, and has power under the Maori Trustee Act, 1930, to undertake the development and farming of the lands on behalf of the Maori owners thereof.

The lands in question are those vested by the Maori Land Court in the Maori Trustee, those acquired under mortgage, and those where the Maori Trustee has been appointed administrator. The Common Fund is comprised principally of moneys, such as purchase-moneys, rents from reserves and estates, compensation payments, and moneys deposited by the various Maori Land Boards. Special investments are those expressly directed to be invested otherwise than in the Common Fund. It is the responsibility of the Maori Trustee to administer these funds and to farm or develop the lands for the benefit of interested parties.

At the present time there are seventeen properties which are being farmed under section 25 of the Maori Trustee Act, 1930, and of these, thirteen are administered in the Gisborne district, two in the Wanganui district, and two by Head Office.

The total area of these stations is 52,301 acres, comprising very mixed country and requiring various types of farming operations. At the 31st March there were 59,502 sheep on these areas and 8,050 cattle. During the year 1,735 bales of wool were produced, and the sales of live-stock totalled £71,110. The amount of the debt on these properties has been reduced from £201,122 to £112,000, and in one case a credit balance is shown.

MAORI LAND BOARDS

The various activities of the Maori Land Boards may be summarized under the following headings:—

- (a) To control and administer on behalf of Maori beneficiaries funds derived from the alienation of Maori lands.
- (b) To administer, until 1957, areas of Maori land vested in the Boards in trust for the beneficial owners with power to sell and lease.
- (c) To act as agent of the Maori owners in respect of Maori lands set apart for settlement or alienated by resolution of assembled owners.
- (d) To advance moneys for farming, improvements, and settlement of Maori lands or the discharge of liabilities thereon.
- (e) To purchase and farm lands and to acquire land in trust for the Maori people.
- (f) To carry on agricultural or pastoral business on Maori land with the consent of the owners.
- (g) To engage in or undertake industry which is deemed to be in the interests of the Maori people.
- (h) To make recommendations in respect of applications for Maori housing, and to act as the agent of the Board of Maori Affairs, in the collection of moneys in repayment of advances for housing purposes.
- (i) To act as agent of the Board of Maori Affairs in granting leases on lands which are subject to provisions relating to State land-development schemes.