

LEGISLATION

The Maori Purposes Act, 1948, consisted principally of matters of local interest and minor amendments to the law. Provision was made for the empowering of Tribal Committees in isolated areas to carry out all or any of the functions of a Tribal Executive. This power was necessary to enable Tribal Committees to function in districts where the formation of a Tribal Executive is not warranted by reason of the small Maori population and the distance from other committees.

Provision was also made for the extension to the 30th June, 1950, of the terms of leases of Maori lands vested in Maori Land Boards under Parts XIV and XV of the Maori Land Act, 1931, in cases where the terms of such leases would normally expire before that date. The purpose of the extension was to preserve the rights and obligations of the lessors and lessees pending the determination of questions which have arisen in regard to the compensation for improvements carried out by the lessees during the terms of the leases.

To give effect to the recommendations of the Royal Commission set up in 1947 to inquire into matters affecting the West Coast Settlement Reserves in Taranaki, the West Coast Settlement Reserves Amendment Act, 1948, was passed during the last session of Parliament. The main purpose of this Act was to provide for the assessment of rentals under renewed leases of the reserves on the basis of the unimproved value of the land as determined by the Government Valuation.

LAKE TAUPO WATERS COMPENSATION

In December, 1948, the Lake Taupo Waters Claims Compensation Court, set up pursuant to section 14 of the Maori Land Amendment and Maori Land Claims Adjustment Act, 1926, made its award of compensation to the owners of Maori lands bordering upon rivers flowing into Lake Taupo. Under the Act of 1926 a Proclamation was issued declaring to be Crown lands the beds of rivers and streams flowing into the lake for specified distances, and provision was made for a right-of-way 1 chain wide along the banks of the rivers and streams to give public access to them. The Act provided for a Commission to be set up to award compensation for the right-of-way and the restrictions imposed upon the use of the land.

Owing to certain technical difficulties, the appointment of the Commission was delayed, but in 1946 legislation was enacted to resolve those difficulties.

The Commissioner appointed was Sir Harold Johnston, K.C., with whom Judge E. M. Beechey, of the Maori Land Court, sat as assessor. A total sum of £45,600 was awarded to the owners for the damage suffered in the use of their land and the loss suffered by deprivation of the right to let any part of the land for camping-sites or for fishing purposes.

STAFF

There were several changes in the senior staff of the Department during the year. On 30th September, 1948, the Under-Secretary and Maori Trustee, Mr. G. P. Shepherd, I.S.O., retired after forty-two years in the Public Service. Formerly Chief Clerk in the Department, he was later appointed a Judge of the Maori Land Court, and in 1941 became Chief Judge. On his being appointed as Under-Secretary in 1944 he retained the dual position for one and one half years, when he relinquished the Chief Judgeship. Mr. Shepherd's services were recognized by the award of I.S.O. in the King's Birthday Honours List.