

The advantages of the assembled owners' provision (Part XVIII) have not yet received the full attention of the public, but every indication points to this important feature of the Native Land Act, 1909, being better availed of in the future. Although during the first six months practically no application under Part XVIII had been received, a considerable area was dealt with in the last half, and the settlement of 115,143 acres thereby determined. The Boards during the year issued requisitions for the surveys of 112,685 acres, which it is anticipated will be completed and lands offered during the current year.

NATIVE LAND PURCHASE BOARD.

The Board as constituted by section 361 of the Native Land Act held twelve meetings, and considered offers aggregating 902,074 acres. The purchase of 75,437 acres has been completed, while some 430,560 acres are under negotiation. Private alienation has been prohibited in respect of 271,058 acres, while the offers of 88,933 acres are held over pending appeals, &c. Only two offers, totalling 162 acres, were declined by the Board. Meetings of assembled owners in respect of several offers passed resolutions against the sales of a total area of 35,922 acres.

FEES.

During the year the fees paid into the Public Account were—by Native Land Court, the sum of £5,945 16s. 5d.; by Maori Land Boards, £3,469 18s. 6d.; other sources, £92 5s.: in all aggregating £9,507 19s. 11d.

A study of these important figures will show that the settlement and occupation of Maori land is being proceeded with at a rapid rate. If it were to continue for a very few years, not one acre of Native land would remain. The area of land dealt with during the past year easily constitutes a record, and proves the value of the comprehensive legislation embodied in the Native Land Act, 1909.

DEFENCE.

The new Defence Act, which is now in operation, provides for the gradual military training of every male above the age of fourteen in New Zealand, and the enormous amount of work involved in connection with the putting into operation of this Act is, I think, quite apparent to honourable members. It is to be hoped that we shall eventually be able to build up a citizen army which, in its organization, training, and efficiency, will enable us to preserve our shores inviolable from invasion by a foreign foe. I would mention that a staff of specially selected officers has been engaged from the Imperial Army at Home, in order to assist in the carrying-out of the organization and training of the new force on the most modern and up-to-date lines, and it is very gratifying that such excellent headway has already been made towards placing our defences on a more secure footing.

The authorizations asked for are within the amount I placed before the House when submitting the new Defence scheme for its consideration. To enable the necessary equipment to be provided, I propose to pay out of ordinary revenue the full amount required, which is estimated at £150,000. It is not desirable that equipment should be provided out of loan-moneys; and, holding this opinion, I am making the necessary provision to enable the course I am now indicating to be followed.

The extremely practical outcome of the new Act, whereby all youths who are physically fit, and have attained the age of fourteen years, undergo a course of military training, will, I am confident, be of undoubted benefit to the individual in after-life. During his period of training he will be taught discipline and those habits of alertness of mind and body, also patriotism, which should be the qualities of a good citizen as well as of a good soldier. There is no need, I think, for me to further enlarge on the good results that will accrue by the adoption of universal military training in New Zealand.

Special efforts are being made to ensure that the building-up of this force will be carried out with a minimum of inconvenience to employers and employees, and without in any way interrupting the ordinary routine of trade and commerce. The necessity of always being prepared to defend our shores is of paramount importance, and it behoves us all to do everything in our power to assist the scheme and endeavour to bring home to the people of this Dominion the great responsibility which rests with themselves, as the building-up of a citizen army on the most economical