

the Public Trustee's position as the landlord and his consequent functions as a debt-collector, the voluntary business that accrues to the office is comparatively small.

It is also urged that the Native business has not paid. The following table gives the sources and approximately the amount of remuneration derived from the Public Trustee from all Native reserves:—

	£
7½ per cent. on West Coast Settlement Reserves ...	1,804
7½ per cent. on other reserves	762
3¾ per cent. on Native licenses	244
Consent fees to transfer, at 5s. each	60
Lease fees, from £1 to £3 3s.	100
5 per cent. commission on Native minors' estates ...	400
	£3,370

The annual expenses in connection with the administration are estimated at £3,480.

On this estimate the business is done at a loss, but with the revaluation of the rents on the West Coast the commission to be derived therefrom in the near future will, it is estimated, on the reduced basis of 5 per cent. per annum, which the Public Trustee now proposes, reach £4,000 per annum, instead of something over £2,000 per annum as at present. This should afford a handsome profit to the Trust Office, which should compensate it to some extent, at all events, for unremunerative work done in the past. Nevertheless the Public Trustee and those members of the office staff who have given evidence to us hold the view that the office should be relieved of Native work. Further, the interests of the Natives should be paramount. Moreover, the total removal of the administration from the Public Trust Office would help to relieve the overtaxed resources of the office, and it would certainly be impolitic at present to increase the personal duties of the Public Trustee by involving him in schemes for the betterment of the Natives if such are to be initiated.

After careful consideration of the foregoing matters, and, in particular, after considering the evidence taken by last year's Commission on the West Coast Settlement Reserves, and the interesting and clear evidence given before us by Judge Jack, the President of the Aotea Maori Land Board, and Mr. T. W. Fisher, the Under-Secretary of Native Affairs, both of whom were at one time on the staff of the Public Trust Office, and were engaged in connection with the reserves referred to, we are of opinion that in the administration of these reserves the Native point of view should be adequately represented, and that it would be in the interests of the Natives if by means of the revenues from these reserves—their own property—they could be assisted to better themselves as agriculturists and otherwise.

To this end we are of opinion that the whole of the Native reserves and their administration should be vested in an independent body. We therefore suggest that a Native Reserves Trustee should be created, with a Board consisting of himself, the Under-Secretary of Native Affairs (or some other expert in Native affairs), the Under-Secretary of Lands, and two other members appointed by the Governor, of whom one should be a Native and the other a European who has had experience in agricultural matters.

The Native Trustee, acting under the Board, should, we suggest be endowed with the main functions of a Maori Land Board, except that he would not be authorized to sell in cases where the Public Trustee is not now authorized to do so. All existing trusts should be maintained, so that the change shall not alter the rights of beneficiaries.

A suggestion has been made in favour of the creation of a separate Maori Land Board for the purpose of the West Coast Settlement Reserves, or the vesting of them in the Aotea Maori Land Board, but an objection to this suggestion is that such Board would be out of touch with the Native and Lands Departments.