

The Board we have described would, of course, be appointed to have the care of infants and other beneficiaries under disability instead of the Public Trustee, but it should invest all its funds requiring investment in the Common Fund of the Public Trust Office. The powers conferred on Maori Land Boards with reference to working lands as farms instead of letting should also be taken, as well as any others considered desirable for giving effect to a policy of helping the Native to advance.

As regards expense, we are told in evidence that five Maori Land Boards exist in the North Island, and are self-supporting on a basis of 5 per cent. commission and fees. Having regard to the approaching large increases in the rentals of the West Coast Reserves, there need, we think, be no fear that the Board proposed would cast on the Native owners any greater obligations than they bear at present. In any event, if the Public Trustee has been administering these reserves at a loss, it is not just that that loss should continue to be borne by the office. It should be borne by those for whose benefits the trusts are created, and the creation of a separate trustee would assist to that end.

The Public Trustee and his various agencies could be authorized where convenience would thereby be served to act in the collection of rents and in making payments on behalf of the Native Trust, subject, of course, to being paid properly for his services.

VII. GENERALLY TO REPORT UPON ANY MATTERS THAT CAME UNDER OUR NOTICE IN THE COURSE OF OUR INVESTIGATIONS, AND TO MAKE ANY SUGGESTIONS WHICH IN OUR OPINION WOULD TEND TO THE GREATER EFFICIENCY OF THE PUBLIC TRUST OFFICE.

Office Staff and Organization.

The staff, which generally may be described as bright, intelligent, and capable, is insufficient in numbers in the skilled departments and is greatly overworked. The members of it are in many instances, and particularly in the skilled departments, underpaid. Further, the remuneration attached to the higher officers is also, in our opinion, inadequate to the responsibilities imposed.

That the staff is undermanned and overworked is evident from an estimate of the amount of overtime for the twelve months ending 31st May last, as gauged by the amount paid on that account. (*Note.*—1s. 6d. is allowed for tea money per night of two hours.)

Head Office—				£	s.	d.
Tea money	...	...	...	188	16	0
Overtime, 1s. 6d. per hour	...	...	...	368	19	6
Agencies—						
Tea money	...	...	...	17	17	0
Overtime	...	...	...	9	4	1
				£584 16 7		

Subject to a slight variation because of the higher rate of overtime in the case of senior officers, these payments indicate 10,552 hours' overtime, or 1,507 working-days, or fourteen men for two hours and a half nightly throughout the year. To this an addition of five thousand hours (for which no payment was made) can, so the evidence shows, be included, being for broken and excess times. With this addition we have 15,552 hours' overtime, or 2,221 working-days, or twenty men for two hours and a half nightly throughout the year. One officer worked sixteen months' time, counting by hours, in a period of twelve months.

The extent of overtime worked indicates inadequacy of staff, and also renders it impossible to get the best work out of it during the day. The undermanning particularly applies to the skilled staff.