

Orders in Council were issued appointing sixty-five Boards to control domains for further terms. Over eighty vacancies on some sixty-two Domain Boards were filled by the appointment of suitable persons nominated by the residents of the particular districts concerned.

A large volume of correspondence was dealt with, not only in connection with appointments, &c., but also with regard to general inquiries on matters of administration, leasing of domain areas, applications for subsidies, charges for admission, &c. Other documents issued included the following: A warrant authorizing the erection of a public hall on the Hakarau Domain; an Order in Council uniting the Woodville and Gorge Domains; a Proclamation adding certain portions of closed road to the Brighton Domain.

Portion of the Norsewood Domain, containing an area of 5 acres 2 roods 33 perches, was exchanged for an area of 6 acres of private land more suitable for recreation purposes. The difference in value between the two areas was subscribed by the local people.

An area of 9 acres and 27 perches of the Opunake Domain which is controlled by the Opunake Town Board acting as a Domain Board, was taken under the Public Works Act, with the consent of the Department, for a site for a high school. An old school-site of 1 acre was transferred in exchange to the Crown by the Taranaki Education Board. This area has been reserved for municipal purposes and vested in the Town Board; and any revenue derived therefrom will be paid into the Domain Account. The total area of the domain was 33 acres 1 rood 24 perches, and an ample area has been retained to meet the recreation requirements of the locality. The portion taken for a school-site had not been used for recreation purposes, but had been leased for grazing. The whole matter was approved at a public meeting called to consider the proposals.

The Gleniti Domain, containing an area of 1 acre 2 roods, was taken as an addition to a public-school site under the Public Works Act, and vested in the Canterbury Education Board, this being the wish of the local residents concerned. The domain adjoins the school, and for many years has been used solely by the school-children as a playground. The Domain Board found very little use for the land, and were unable to obtain sufficient revenue to keep it in order.

Some important changes in the law relating to public domains have been effected by the passing of the Public Reserves, Domains, and National Parks Act, 1928. This Act is a consolidation and revision of the Public Reserves and Domains Act, 1908, and its amendments, together with an entirely new part dealing with the constitution and administration of national parks. A considerable amount of detailed investigation into the whole of the statutes dealing with public reserves and domains was involved, and it was found necessary to effect a complete revision and rearrangement in order to bring the law up to date and in keeping with modern practice.

Of the entirely new provisions in the Act mention must be made of the power conferred on the Governor-General by section 41 to revoke by Order in Council the reservation over any public domain or part thereof, and to declare either that such land shall be a public reserve subject to the provisions of Part I of the Act, or Crown land available for disposal by way of sale for cash under the Land Act, 1924. Such power of revocation is, however, subject to the sanction of Parliament, and the proceeds from the sale of any land over which the reservation has been cancelled must be applied in the purchase of other land for domain purposes, or for the improvement and development of existing domains. In the past it has been necessary to invoke the aid of special legislation when it has been found desirable to cancel the reservation over any public domain that is not required for the purpose for which it was set apart.

Section 46 provides power for increasing the membership of a Domain Board to any number not exceeding nine, and to make the additional appointments required. This will dispense with the previous cumbersome method of revoking the appointment of a Domain Board and reconstituting the Board in cases where it was desired to increase the membership.

Section 47 provides that the members of a Domain Board shall not be personally liable for any act of the Board done or omitted to be done in good faith in the course of the operations of the Board, nor for any debt or other liability of the Board lawfully incurred. Under the previous law it was held, for instance, that members of a Domain Board were personally liable to bear half-cost of fencing between their domain and an adjoining owner, and the protection now afforded members carrying out voluntary duties for the public good is thoroughly justified.

Under section 57 of the Act all moneys received by any Board must be forthwith paid into such bank as the Board may from time to time appoint.

Local authorities which are acting as Domain Boards are empowered by section 60 to borrow by way of special loan moneys for the improvement and development of their domains. In the past provision has been made from time to time by means of special legislation to enable this to be done, and it was considered that the time had arrived to make general provision in that respect.

With regard to the question of charging for admission to domains, and the number of days upon which charges may be made, the new Act provides that charges may be made on not more than twenty days in any year, with an extension to thirty days by special permission. The number of charge days was previously limited to ten in any year, with an extension to fifteen by special permission. An increase in the maximum charge up to 2s. per head may be authorized by the Minister.

The Act empowers Domain Boards to enter into agreements with societies or sports bodies for the use of any domain, or any particular portion thereof, on a specified number of days in each year. The maximum period for any such agreement is five years at any one time, with power for the Minister to authorize an extension in any particular case. Under this arrangement it is considered that sports bodies, athletic clubs, and other organizations may be able to secure a better tenure of sports-grounds, to the mutual advantage of themselves and the controlling Domain Boards. A safeguarding provision has been included, in that any agreement must be publicly notified, and, if objections are lodged, the consent of the Minister must be obtained before the agreement can be completed.