

of Native land were not sufficiently rigid for the proper protection of the Natives, and alienations were becoming so numerous that a grave danger arose of the Natives ultimately becoming more or less a charge on the State. District Councils were therefore appointed under the Maori Lands Administration Act of 1900, with power to review all transactions and to terminate negotiations considered inimical to the interests of the Native owners. However, these Councils apparently did not function satisfactorily, and in 1905 they were converted into Maori Land Boards. Each Board then consisted of a president and two members appointed by the Governor, one of them being a Maori.

256. The constitution of the Boards was again altered in 1913 to two members—namely, the President, who must be a Judge of the Native Land Court district, corresponding with the Maori Land Board district, and the Registrar of the Court.

257. No material alteration has been made since that date. The feature of the Board's constitution is that the President has sole jurisdiction, and when sitting in company with the Registrar has a casting-vote in addition to his ordinary vote. **The Boards may therefore be deemed to be "one man" Boards.** The fact that the President has jurisdiction over alienations and that he is also the Judge of the corresponding Native Land Court district indicates that the line of demarcation between the duties of Boards and Courts has in some respects disappeared, and there appears to be little objection to the Courts taking over from the Boards those functions which can reasonably be vested in them.

258. The functions and powers of the Boards may be defined as follow :—

- (a) Confirmation of alienations by way of sale, lease, mortgage, &c.
- (b) Vesting of Native lands in Boards.
- (c) Collection and distribution of sale-moneys and rentals.
- (d) Holding in trust purchase or other moneys due to Natives in certain circumstances.
- (e) Disposal of revenues received by the Board.
- (f) Selling of lands vested in it.
- (g) Granting of licenses for the removal of timber, flax, kauri-gum, or minerals from any land vested in it, subject to the consent of the Governor-General in Council.
- (h) Farming land vested in it and raising money for the purpose. The appointment of a farm manager is subject to the approval of the Native Minister.

Also, subject to the consent of the Native Minister, as follows :—

- (i) Advancing of moneys to Natives on loan—
 - (1) For the purposes of any agricultural or pastoral business carried on :
 - (2) For the payment of any debts or liabilities of any body corporate constituted under the Act :
 - (3) For the discharge of any charge, encumbrance, rates, or taxes affecting any Native freehold land :
 - (4) For the farming, improvement, or settlement of any Native freehold land :
 - (5) For any other purpose that the Governor-General in Council may authorize.
- (j) Guaranteeing accounts of Native dairy-farmers up to £300 with co-operative dairy companies.
- (k) Purchasing and farming Native lands.
- (l) Acquisition of land for Natives.
- (m) Undertaking industries on behalf of Natives.
- (n) Forming and constructing roads for the purpose of opening up Native land for settlement. Boards may borrow moneys for the purpose.

259. The functions of Boards have undergone considerable change since their inauguration, and the President has a heavy responsibility devolving upon him. **Originally the main duty of the Boards was to protect Natives from exploitation, but the trend of recent legislation is to provide ways and means of assisting in their social and economic welfare. Their financial operations are of some magnitude. As the Boards are substantially "one man" Boards, it follows that the expenditure of their funds is not subject to that supervision and control which is desirable. Incidentally, an officer appointed because of his judicial qualifications may not have that judgment in financial matters which is essential.**

260. The legislative enactments of 1929 and onwards give a measure of Head Office control over the Boards, and this was undoubtedly a step in the right direction.

261. With the transfer of the judicial functions of the Boards to the Courts, it appears that there would be no justification for the continuance of the Boards as such, and they should be absorbed into the departmental organization which we shall outline later. The Boards at present have separate bank accounts to which all moneys received are lodged, and they each pay to the Consolidated Fund annually an amount to cover administration expenses. All sums of money earned as interest by the Board not on account of any specific investment on behalf of a particular beneficiary are deemed to be the property of the Boards. They have power—

- (1) To allot such interest as they think fit to any accounts :
- (2) With the approval of the Native Minister, to acquire office-sites and build thereon :
(Note.—The offices at Auckland, Wanganui, Rotorua, and Gisborne were acquired out of Board funds.)
- (3) To contribute to the Maori Purposes Fund to which reference is made later.

Leases of Native Lands.

262. In regard to alienations of Native lands subject to control by the Boards, the Act provides that no such alienation by way of lease shall be for a longer period (including any term or terms of renewal to which the lessee is entitled) than fifty years.