

PART IV.—EAST COAST NATIVE TRUST LANDS.

By virtue of section 7 of the Board of Native Affairs Act, 1934–35, the East Coast Native Trust lands and the Mangatu Trust were brought under the control of the Board in so far as the operations of the Trusts relate to the expenditure or investment of any moneys or to the giving of mortgages over any property vested in the East Coast Commissioner. The Commissioner is a trustee appointed by the Governor - General by Order in Council in accordance with the provisions of Part IV of the Native Purposes Act, 1931, and is charged with the management and control of certain lands in the interests of the beneficial owners thereof, all of whom are aboriginal natives of New Zealand. The present holder of the office, Mr. J. S. Jessep, is a member of the Board of Native Affairs.

The genesis of the title of the East Coast Commissioner to what are known as the East Coast Native Trust lands arose from the attempt at various times of various trustees to salvage these lands from the financial difficulties they had got into in the “eighties” of the last century. In 1902 the East Coast Native Trust Lands Act was passed, which provided a method of salvaging the East Coast blocks from the realization then imminent.

The Trust vested in the present Commissioner is an extensive one, and comprises a total area of 223,063 acres. It is divided into two portions—the East Coast Native Trust lands and the Mangatu No. 1 Block. The East Coast Native Trust lands comprise 114,191 acres, of which 61,649 acres are divided into twelve stations. The Mangatu No. 1 Trust comprises 108,661 acres, of which 31,504 acres, divided into five stations, are at present being farmed by the Commissioner.

During the year a large amount of development work has taken place on both Trusts, twenty-four miles of new fencing having been erected, and 3,300 acres of bush and scrub felled and cleared. In this way employment has been given to a large number of Maoris. Distributions were made last year to the beneficiaries amounting to £15,226 for the East Coast Native Trust lands and £4,222 for the Mangatu No. 1 Trust. It should be noted that there are no Government moneys involved in the Trust, which is self-contained in regard to its financial affairs.

Live-stock returns at the 30th June last were as follows: 91,687 sheep and 10,409 head of run cattle. The wool-clip of 2,063 bales produced £22,880, and receipts from the sales of live-stock amounted to £54,579, thus making the total return for the year £77,459.

The general policy of the East Coast Commissioner is to employ Maoris wherever possible. Permanent Native employees are engaged on every station, and a large number of Maoris are employed on contract work in felling bush, fencing, draining, and other works of a similar nature. The policy is to use the lands as training grounds for the Maori, and to this end Native cadets have been attached to almost every station. These lads are being trained in all branches of farming, and even wool-classing and blacksmithing are included in the curriculum, with the object of fitting them to manage Native lands.