

Succession Orders.—Succession orders during the period total 1,718, an increase of 47 per cent. This has caused a considerable increase in the work of the office, as in practically 60 per cent. of the cases there is involved the distribution to the successors of rents and farm profits held to the credit of deceased persons, the assessment and payment of Native succession duty, and the retention of sums sufficient to pay accounts for funeral expenses.

Payments of duty for the year ended 31st March, 1938, amounted to £2,974 3s. 8d., representing assessments on individual interests in excess of £200 amounting to £148,700.

Rates.—Orders made securing rates to local authorities totalled 971, a decrease compared with previous years indicating an effort by the Natives to meet their rating responsibilities. This, in part, is a reflection of the improved farms and methods arising out of the Native-land-development policy.

Receiverships.—There were some 292 applications before the Court for the appointment of a Receiver for enforcement of charges for rates, affecting in most cases areas from $\frac{1}{2}$ acre to 5 acres, and being land situated in the more closely settled areas.

During the year a case was stated by the Native Appellate Court for the opinion of the Supreme Court, arising from a decision of the Lower Court, which refused to grant orders under sections 108 and 109 of the Rating Act, 1925. The judgment of the Supreme Court is an important one with far reaching effects and is reported in *Gazette Law Reports*, 1937, page 516.

The Office has acted in an intermediary capacity between Natives and local rating authorities in arranging settlements and/or compromises of rates due which, in many cases, had been contracted by earlier occupiers and had become a hardship on the owners themselves. Assistance has also been given to the local bodies on the revaluation of land by holding meetings in various localities to determine the occupiers and place on the roll those owners who are willing to assume the responsibility for the payment of future rates and for the purpose of the correction of the rolls generally.

Partitions.—Partitions of land are not as numerous as in former years and, in the main, such partitions have only been made for the purpose of subdividing land into suitable holdings for farming purposes to secure sites for the erection of houses under the Native housing scheme and to set apart land for maraes and other public and communal purposes.

Exchanges.—A record number of exchange orders were made, and in almost every case the underlying object being the more effective consolidation of the interests of the parties and the increase of their individual holdings for the furtherance of farming operations.

Other Orders.—Orders of a miscellaneous nature totalled 1,629. With the advancement of the main-highway system in this district a number of orders have been made legalizing roads, which have been in use for many years, closing roads no longer required, and assessing compensation for land taken for railways, roads, bridges, and other public purposes. A greater number of Maori farmers have now obtained legal access to their holdings, which enables the formation and metalling of roads to be undertaken.

The effects of the loss through the 1931 earthquake of titles in the Land Transfer Office, Napier, has occasioned a considerable amount of additional work in the collection and compilation of data for the reconstruction of such titles not only of Native land, but also in cases where land has been acquired by Europeans. The loss of Survey Office records and plans has also occasioned a considerable amount of inconvenience to the Court, and extra work has been involved in the compilation of diagrams for fencing and other purposes.

Alienations.—It is pleasing to record that with the furtherance of development there is a growing tendency on the part of the Natives to acquire land for farming purposes and that approximately 50 per cent. of the alienations confirmed during the year have been in favour of Native alienees. In the case of sales the provisions of section 281 of the Native Land Act, 1931, have been availed of and a considerable amount of purchase-money retained by the Board for the purpose of assisting the vendors in the furtherance of their farming operations on their other lands and for the erection and renovation of houses.

Consolidation.—Northern Waiapu: The progress of this scheme has been retarded by petitions which resulted in the third series of the scheme affecting an area of 1,834 acres being referred back to the Court for amendment, *vide* section 10, Native Purposes Act, 1937.

During the past year the Survey Liens Compromise was finalized, thus allowing of the vesting in the Crown of seven blocks of Native land offered in settlement. An application is at present before the Court for final orders in this direction. The area affected totals 3,803 acres.

Mohaka: This scheme was delayed by shortage of staff in the early part of the year, but the draft scheme is now being placed before the Hon. the Native Minister for his consideration.

Native Housing.—For particulars of years operations see report of Board of Native Affairs.

Maori Welfare.—During the year extensive work has been carried out amongst Maori communities in the Tairāwhiti District in the direction of constructing and extending Maori meeting-houses and dining-halls at different maraes. The Tairāwhiti Board has attended to the financial arrangements in this direction. In certain maraes the Board has made donations of funds, and in others it has granted loans secured by assignments of future rents.

In carrying out the above projects surplus unemployed labour was used for the unskilled part of the construction work under the supervision of officers of the Department. The absence of skilled workers amongst all classes of the Maori race has been severely felt in the various building works which have been undertaken. An attempt to overcome this handicap has been made by ensuring that, in all building enterprises, a good proportion of Maori learners are allotted to each contract.

Board Operations.—A general increase in the activities of the Tairāwhiti Maori Land Board is reflected in this year's financial statement. Although last year's figures showed an increase on the previous year, this year's financial returns are better than those for the year ended 31st March, 1937.