

LEGISLATION.

The legislation enacted during the year under review included the Native Housing Amendment Act and the annual Native Purposes Act.

The main purpose of the Native Housing Amendment Act is to extend the provisions of the principal Act by enabling those Natives who are in needy or indigent circumstances to enjoy the benefits of this social legislation. These cases are particularly dealt with in section 18 of the amending Act, which establishes the Special Native Housing Fund. The fund is to be utilized, in so far as money is available, in the provision of dwellings for those Natives, such as pensioners and workers with a number of dependants, who would ordinarily be unable to furnish the security or make the repayments required under the principal Act. Provision is also made for local authorities, trustees, and incorporated bodies to make contributions of land or money to the fund.

Under the principal Act the Board of Native Affairs may advance moneys to Natives for the purpose of erection or renovation of dwellings for the installation of lighting, heating, sanitation, water-supplies, and other conveniences, for the purchase of land for a site, and for the improvement of land appurtenant to a dwelling. The amending Act extends these powers by providing for the acquisition of land or the setting-apart of Crown land to enable the Board of Native Affairs itself to erect dwellings and to sell, lease, or let them.

The annual Native Purposes Acts are in the nature of "washing up" Bills and their provisions affect Natives and Native land generally. The Act of 1938 is largely concerned with matters relevant to long-standing claims by Natives.

A further legislative measure of benefit to the Maori people which was exercised during the year under review was that of the Electoral Amendment Act, 1937. Under this Act there was introduced for the first time a secret ballot in connection with elections for Maori electoral districts. Safeguards against irregularity of voting have been provided, and in general the procedure has now been made substantially similar to the conduct of elections of European representatives.

EXPENDITURE FROM CONSOLIDATED FUND.

For the year under review the gross expenditure from Consolidated Fund, vote "Native," was £145,505, and the recoveries amounted to £22,572. Brief particulars of the net expenditure covering general costs of administration and grants for Native purposes are as follows:—

General administration—				£	£	£
Salaries and staff expenses (including travelling) ..				116,825		
Office expenses (rent, stationery, postages, &c.) ..				12,531		
						129,356
Less recoveries from the Native Trustee and Maori Land Boards				22,977		
						106,379
Purchase of equipment (motor-vehicles, office buildings, and furniture)					2,382	
						108,761
Grants for Native purposes—						
Ahuwhenua Trophy					95	
Maori Purposes Fund					600	
Ngaruawahia celebrations					248	
Survey liens written off					2,000	
Miscellaneous					50	
						2,993
Protection of Native land—						
Destruction of rabbits					1,167	
Clearing noxious weeds					5,000	
						6,167
Taranaki lands compensation						5,000
Sundries						12
						£122,933

Although the total cost of administration amounted to £131,738, representing approximately 4 per cent. of the year's turnover of £3,228,164, the net cost to the State was only £103,013 after deducting sums of £22,977 (recovered from the Native Trustee and the Maori Land Boards) and £5,748 (fees of the Native Land Courts and the Maori Land Boards collected in stamps and credited to the Consolidated Fund). The sum of £2,000 represents a payment to the Lands and Survey Department in reduction of the sum of approximately £45,000 authorized in 1930 to be written off survey liens charged against various blocks of Native land. The object of the writing-off was to clear the titles of excessive charges and pave the way for consolidation and development. The total sum paid to date is £37,000. The expenditure on destruction of rabbits and noxious weeds on Native land is actually made by the Agriculture Department, and in accordance with a standing arrangement that Department is recouped from vote "Native." The payment of £5,000 in respect of the Taranaki land is made to the Taranaki Maori Trust Board for the benefit of the four leading Taranaki tribes in accordance with section 49 of the Native Purposes Act, 1931, which authorizes the settlement of Native grievances regarding confiscated land. Each annual payment is subject to parliamentary appropriation.