

*Waiariki District.*

*Native Land Court.*—Sittings of the Court were held at Taupo, Murupara, Rotorua, Tauranga, Whakatane, and Opotiki, as being most convenient for the parties to attend and being in or near the large centres of Maori population. There were twenty-seven sittings, and the interest evinced in the Court proceedings is reflected by the substantial increase in the volume of business transacted, which constitutes a record for the district over a period of twenty years. The number of cases notified during the year was 7,073, compared with 2,680 for the previous year; and orders were made in respect of 2,235 cases, as against 804 in the preceding year. These figures represent an increase in notifications and orders made of 164 per cent. and 178 per cent. respectively.

Orders appointing successors to deceased Natives numbered 849, a decrease of 55 in the figures for the previous year.

Partitions of land into suitable holdings for farming, housing sites, and, in some cases, for carrying into effect confirmed alienations of land numbered 180, and covered an aggregate area of 5,379 acres. Although the number of subdivisions made shows a numerical increase of 58, occasioned by the housing requirements of the people, the total area dealt with is 2,939 acres less than the previous year's figure.

Applications for orders of receivership were granted in 31 cases, and applications by the Receiver for leave to lease are pending in respect of 14 of these cases.

Orders comprising exchange of landed interests, laying off and legalization of roads, grants of probate and letters of administration, and other orders of a miscellaneous nature numbered 589, as compared with the previous year's total of 318, an increase of 85 per cent. There were 302 cases advertised and subsequently dismissed for reasons of non-prosecution or on account of orders having already been made in respect thereof. This left a total of 4,546 cases for prosecution and adjudication during the coming year.

Charging orders securing the payment of rates levied by local authorities and the Lands Department numbered 1,148 and comprised more than half of the total orders made by the Court. These orders affect unoccupied lands and lands being farmed without State or other financial assistance. A large number of charging orders were, however, made in respect of lands subject to the provisions of Part I of the Native Land Amendment Act, 1936.

It will be appreciated that the question of rating on Native lands in this district constitutes a problem which is becoming increasingly difficult. The solution appears to require a scheme which does not impose hardship on those Natives who, through the handicap of a communal title to lands, are unable to arrange finance to farm their lands profitably or who, through inexperience, are able to produce only sufficient for their sustenance. At the same time, the scheme should avoid the placing of a heavy burden upon the European ratepayers. A suggestion emanating from a Judge of the Native Land Court that both the land and the people be classified and that the ability of the individual Maori to meet payment of rates be taken into account is one worthy of consideration and trial.

The Maori Land Board has been instrumental in arranging numerous compromises of drainage and county rates on a satisfactory basis.

A sitting of the Native Appellate Court was held at Rotorua during the year for the purpose of hearing two appeals from decisions of the Native Land Court.

*Consolidation.*—The Horohoro series of the Rotomahana-Parekarangi scheme, comprising 6,478 acres, was completed during the year and submitted for confirmation by the Native Minister. Although confirmation was not received prior to the close of the year under review, this scheme, when finalized by the necessary orders and surveys, is designed to clarify the position of the land development settlers in so far as the question of ownership of the land is concerned and to provide a title upon which their future tenures might be based. Hitherto the position of settlers generally, and more particularly those brought from other districts, has not been altogether satisfactory, due mainly to uncertainty of tenure, despite the provisions of Part I of the Native Land Amendment Act, 1936. The proposals submitted with the above scheme of consolidation provided for the protection of owner-settlers by the grouping of their interests and those of immediate relatives in and around their present holdings and by the location of Crown interests into holdings occupied by settlers from other districts who will eventually become Crown tenants. Thus these latter settlers are also protected, and due appreciation is recorded of the services of those officers of the Lands and Survey Department who collaborated with conciliation and understanding in the solution of a complex and delicate problem. The areas awarded to the Crown and the Natives are 1,613 acres and 4,865 acres respectively, and the award to the Crown satisfied all rates and survey liens compromised in respect of the whole of the Rotomahana-Parekarangi scheme.

Satisfactory progress has been made with the Waikite Valley series, comprising 6,195 acres, and where it is desired that the Crown purchases in the Rotomahana-Parekarangi Blocks be consolidated. Progress has also been made in respect of the Waikaukau series (1,208 acres), occupied by settlers from other districts; Tuhourangi series (1,025 acres), occupied by owner-settlers; Kapenga No. 2 (400 acres), developed but unoccupied; and the Parekarangi Extension series (1,964 acres), of which 600 acres are developed but unoccupied.

Having regard to the shortage of specialized consolidation staff, progress during the year has been very satisfactory. It is hoped that further staff will be made available, as with the progress of land development the need for consolidation is becoming accentuated.

*Maori Land Board.* Alienations of Native land appear to have declined, probably as a result of erstwhile activity in this direction. Sales are reduced to a minimum, as in many cases the Native owners have in the past become landless within the meaning of the Native Land Act. Alienations of timber areas have, however, shown an appreciable increase, but it is evident that the indication