

of attempts to evade agreements requiring confirmation will require firm action in the future. The Board is fulfilling its function of collection of proceeds of alienation and interest on mortgages. The application of rentals and royalties towards meeting-houses funds during the year has imposed further responsibilities upon the administrative and accounting branches of the office.

The substantial amounts from royalties, rents, and sales which are being handled by the Board have necessitated a closer investigation of requirements of beneficiaries. This phase of activity constitutes a virtual trusteeship, with its attendant duties of thorough inquiry and careful disbursement of moneys.

Various statutory notices are served on the Board, and, while authority for the acceptance of service appears to be lacking, the Board is the logical authority to receive these notices, provided it is empowered to protect the interests of the Natives. The matter should, however, be placed on a proper footing by conferring upon the Board legal authority to accept these notices and by empowering the Board to take any steps necessary on behalf of the Natives.

The Board has arranged securities in all cases in which advances have been made for housing purposes. The legal formalities are completed before any expenditure is made, and, where possible, the securities are perfected by registration.

The finances of the Board are in a satisfactory position, and reserves now total £53,901. Of the liability to Native beneficiaries, £64,128, and miscellaneous deposits, £3,002, approximately 60 per cent. is covered by cash and investments at short call. The receipts for the current year, £38,295, exceeded the expenditure by £6,015, and, in addition, deposits with the Native Trustee exceeded withdrawals by £6,663. The actual income for the year exceeded expenditure by £1,603, and disbursements made by the Board covered 4,191 individual payments.

The Board's investments total £112,871, made up as follows:—

	£
Mortgages	25,578
Advances on overdraft	351
Farm properties	52,802
Deposit Account with Native Trustee	34,140

Although no additional advances were made during the year, the Board continued its policy of assisting in the active management of properties under mortgage. Receipts and disbursements in respect of these properties totalled £9,391 and £5,364 respectively. Three loans were repaid during the year.

With a view to the more profitable utilization of the Board's surplus funds by assisting Natives within the district in the ensuing year, particular attention and consideration will be given to applications by Natives for assistance in their farming activities or for improvement of their housing-conditions. In its administration of trust funds the Board has continued its policy of encouraging and in some instances requiring, beneficiaries to utilize the funds available to them for the purchase of assets in the nature of furniture, farm requisites, or clothing.

Native Housing.—The Native housing legislation made it possible for Maori Land Boards to assist in the implementing of the Government's policy of improving the housing-conditions of the Maori people. This Board gladly undertakes this duty, as it is known, from long association with the people, that proper housing-accommodation is their greatest single need. The Board considers that, in order to function effectively in this important phase of Maori welfare, it must correlate, wherever possible, the needs and financial circumstances of each applicant for housing assistance with an appropriate design of dwelling—in other words, the Board must explore all possible avenues towards providing each badly-housed Maori with accommodation suitable to his requirements and at a cost which is within his ability to repay.

General Maori Welfare.—As the activities of the district offices of the Department include that of welfare work, it is considered that there is need for the appointment of suitable welfare officers. These officers should constitute a liaison between the Maoris and the various Government Departments which administer services for their benefit.

Tairāwhiti District.

Native Land Court.—During the year twenty-one sittings of the Court were held in the various centres of the Tairāwhiti district from Wairoa in the south to Te Araroa in the north. This district contains extensive areas of fertile and highly productive Native land with a very large Maori population, and keen interest was taken by the Natives in the proceedings of the Court, to which they look with confidence for the determination of their rights to land, the disposition of real and personal property, and other matters affecting their rights, obligations, and welfare.

There has again been a substantial increase in the volume of Court business, and the number of orders issued reached the high total of 5,947, an increase of 32 per cent. over the previous year's record of 4,519. Succession orders during the period total 1,745, an increase over the previous year. As the distribution of rents and farm profits to the successors of deceased persons is involved in practically 60 per cent. of the cases, the work of the office has not lessened in this direction. During the year 2,557 charging orders were made securing rates to ten different local authorities. The majority of the lands affected are small holdings located in the southern portion of the district where there are many Native settlements.