

The local authorities appear to have finally adopted the charging-order method of recovering payment of Native rates. A recent Supreme Court decision established the principle that, once a charging order was made, a receivership order could be claimed as of right. The result is that exhaustive inquiries have now to be made by the Court when considering rate-charging applications. This calls for extra investigation by the Court staff and the Maori Welfare Officers, and has placed additional responsibilities on the personnel.

There were some three hundred applications for the appointment of a Receiver for enforcement of charges for rates, the majority being brought over from the previous year, and affecting in most cases areas under 5 acres and situated in and about Native settlements. Some of these have been brought before the Court, and settlement by compromise and otherwise has been effected between the owners and the local authorities concerned. In the case of the Wairoa Borough Council twenty applications affecting small unoccupied areas within that borough were prosecuted, and in an endeavour to find persons willing to lease their lands and thus secure the payment of future rates and the liquidation of arrears out of rents derived therefrom the Maori Land Board appointed a Receiver in respect of the lands.

The office co-operates with the various local authorities, the Valuation Department, and the Natives for the purpose of the correction of rolls generally and in arranging and assisting in the settlement of rates and effecting compromises. The office has been assisted by leading Natives in the various settlements in the furtherance of this work, and it is pleasing to note that Maoris generally are, where returns are being received from their farming operations and with the assistance of the improved economic conditions, gradually assuming responsibility for their rates.

There has been an increase in the number of partitions made, and with each succeeding year's legislation tending to extend assistance to and for the protection of Natives the activities of the Court are correspondingly increased. In this direction the jurisdiction of the Court has been exercised for the purpose of providing sites for the erection of houses under the Native housing scheme, the setting-apart of land for marae and other public and communal purposes, and the subdivision of lands into economic holdings for farming purposes.

An increase is again shown in the number of exchange orders made. The objective of the parties in every case has been the acquisition of sites for houses and the consolidation of their interests into suitable areas to enable them to take advantage of the opportunity offered under the housing and development schemes.

Other orders made were widely varied in scope, and covered the economic, social, and educational welfare of our Maori people. During the year 1,445 orders were made in connection with the laying-off and legalizing of road-lines in order to allow for more intensive settlement, the granting of probate and letters of administration of Native estates, the adoption of minors, incorporation of lands to enable the body corporate to farm the land for the benefit of the incorporated owners, the vesting of areas for house-sites pursuant to the recent Native housing legislation, confirmation of alienation, and assessment of compensation for land taken for aerodromes, quarries, roads, and other public purposes.

Returns for the past year show that, exclusive of lease renewals, an increased number of alienations confirmed by the Court were to Maori alienees. The assistance given by the Board and the Native Department in providing finance to Maori farmers generally has had the result of enabling them to develop their own lands, and fewer applications for confirmation of sales, leases, &c., in favour of European alienees are now being submitted.

*Consolidation.*—Owing to more pressing activities little progress has been made with the Northern Waiapu consolidation scheme, which embraces 126,000 acres of Native land with a capital value of £546,000. As a result of further petitions the whole of the subdivisions of the Wharckahika and parts of Marangairoa Blocks are now to be the subject of further hearing by the Court.

The draft scheme for the Mohaka consolidation of titles is at present under consideration by the Lands and Survey Department preparatory to submission to the Native Minister for confirmation.

The completion of the Waipiro, Tuparua, Tutakuri, and Waiapu (Southern) consolidation schemes have illustrated the great benefits which consolidation procedure can bring to the whole community. The benefit is most conspicuous in the development of farm holdings, mainly in conjunction with Native land development schemes. The difficult problem of Native rates has also been partially solved as a result of consolidation. A striking example of this is in the Waiapu County, where Maoris are responsible for approximately 40 per cent. of the total rates levied; and, in respect of this proportion, 72 per cent. has actually been collected. Another benefit from consolidation is now being demonstrated in the Native housing scheme, where it has proved invaluable in providing satisfactory title to building-sites.

*Native Housing.*—This activity has been satisfactorily maintained during the year under review, and an efficient organization of Maoris to carry out carpentering and allied work has been established. The progress of housing is dealt with more particularly in the report of the Board of Native Affairs.

*Board Operations.*—The financial activities of the Tairāwhiti Board again show an increase over previous returns, and both receipts and payments are in excess of those for 1937–38. These figures do not include transactions on behalf of Native Trust stations, the administration of which was