

GENERAL REPORT.

THE present personnel of the Board constituted under the Board of Native Affairs Act, 1934-35, is as follows :—

The Native Minister (Chairman).
 The Under-Secretary of the Native Department.
 The Financial Adviser to the Government.
 The Under-Secretary for Lands.
 The Valuer-General.
 The Director-General of Agriculture.
 James S. Jessep, Esquire.
 Hubert M. Christie, Esquire.

This report, dealing with the operations of the Board of Native Affairs during the financial year ended 31st March, 1939, continues the narration, presented in previous statements to both Houses of the General Assembly during the last eight years, of the efforts being made in the development and settlement of Native lands and in the amelioration of the living conditions of the Maori people, through the provision of State or Trust funds.

The last two decades have witnessed a renaissance of the Native race, and this renewal of Maori life is manifest in the increasing population, in inter-tribal gatherings, in the revival of the arts and crafts of the people, in the erection of buildings for communal needs, and also in the general feeling of racial pride.

Unmistakable evidence that a strong desire exists among the leaders of the race to become useful settlers and to contribute to the productive wealth of the country is shown in the growth and magnitude of the land-settlement schemes, which were initiated in 1930 with the object of establishing as many as possible of the people in rural industries. Beginning in the East Coast and Rotorua districts the requests from Native communities for assistance through the State development policy soon increased as the benefits to be derived from modern methods of farming became apparent. In 1931, forty-one schemes had been proclaimed under the development provisions of the Native Land Act, and, of this area, 60,000 acres had been cleared, grassed, or otherwise improved. To-day, 840,000 acres have been included in the project, while, of this total area, 253,000 acres are under cultivation and are either being farmed as individual holdings or are in the process of settlement. Some nineteen hundred settlers are established, and these, with the three thousand farm workers, their wives, children, and other dependent relatives, comprise approximately one-quarter of the Maori population of New Zealand.

The general adverse climatic conditions experienced during the past year were inimical to the farming industry and caused a temporary check to the increase in the volume of production, although on the development schemes production showed an upward trend as a result of top-dressing and the cultivation of further areas, which enabled additional stock to be carried. A cold spring and the effects of facial eczema have resulted in lower lambing percentages. In North Auckland, despite unfavourable conditions, production was well maintained. In the Waikato and King-country districts the prolonged dry summer caused a decline in butterfat production and affected the conservation of winter feed, although, on the other hand, it facilitated burning-off operations. In the Rotorua area the milking herds had to be dried off earlier, due to the shortage of feed. Floods were encountered in the East Coast, Hawke's Bay, and Manawatu districts in the autumn of 1938, which, together with the phenomenally wet winter, caused extensive damage and loss of fences, pastures, and live-stock. In the South Island, variable and extreme weather conditions prevailed. Generally speaking, the recent summer was unfavourable for the dairy-farmer, but in most districts sheep held their condition well, but prices for both fat and store sheep were considerably lower than last year.