

In each district the Committee had the opportunity of discussing all the problems of development with the Superintendent of Land Development in that area or with the local controlling officers. In addition, in some cases the opinions and experiences of local farmers were obtained.

HISTORY OF LAND DEVELOPMENT.

(1) *Land Laws Amendment Act, 1929.*

The development of land prior to settlement was first decided on as a matter of policy in 1929, and the Land Laws Amendment Act, 1929, brought into existence the Lands Development Board, one function of which was to develop suitable unoccupied Crown lands before they were offered for selection. Similarly, suitable unoccupied settlement land—i.e., land purchased for settlement under the Land for Settlements Act—could be developed prior to selection by lessees. The following blocks of land were developed by the Lands Development Board:—

Wharekohe ..	North Auckland.	Galatea ..	Rotorua.
Ngakuru ..	Rotorua.	Whangamarino ..	Auckland.
Te Kauwhata ..	Auckland.	Mangatutu ..	King-country.
Onepu ..	Bay of Plenty.	Pongakawa ..	Bay of Plenty.
Koromatua ..	Auckland.	Kakariki ..	Hawke's Bay.

With the exception of Galatea, of which a small portion only has been settled, and Kakariki, which is still under development, the remaining blocks have all been subdivided and settled. The Lands Development Board also undertook the reconditioning of isolated leaseholds and discharged soldiers' settlement securities which had reverted to the Crown and for which new selectors could not be obtained in their deteriorated condition.

(2) *Small Farms Act, 1932-33.*

The greater number of development blocks at present being handled by the Lands and Survey Department are being developed under the authority of the Small Farms Act, 1932-33, and its amendments. The original small farms scheme was administered by the Department of Agriculture in terms of the Unemployment Act, 1932, and comprised in the main the placing of unemployed married men on very small holdings from which they were intended to obtain portion of their livelihood, and at the same time supplement their earnings by obtaining what outside work was available. Unemployment was then at its height, and it was soon found that the men who had been established under the provisions of the scheme could not obtain the outside work which was necessary to supplement their earnings. A large number of the holdings were soon abandoned, but in some cases it was subsequently found possible to acquire more land and convert the original small holding into a self-supporting unit.

The Small Farms Act, 1932-33, established the Small Farms Board, and the administration of the scheme was placed under the Lands and Survey Department. The Board in its initial stages decided that it was futile to establish men on anything but fully economic holdings, and, although some success was achieved by acquiring suitable areas and establishing men with experience, it was realized at an early date in the Board's activities that if properties were to be available for settlement they would have to be first of all developed and prepared for the purpose. In very few cases was there any Crown land available, and it consequently became necessary to acquire partly improved freeholds or Crown leaseholds, and employ the men on development work. This policy had the following advantages:—

- (a) Work was provided for a large number of men. Not all of them were applicants for land, and in many cases single men's camps were established:
- (b) The men who were seeking land, being unemployed, had no capital, and it was very necessary that they should prove their suitability for farming before they were allotted holdings. Their employment on development work gave the employing authority an opportunity of assessing their suitability.

The extent of the area under development grew in relation to the need for the continued employment of the men, and for the employment of additional men from time to time. The following total shows the number of men employed at the 31st March in each year since 1934:—

1934	560	1939	1,646
1935	1,305	1940	1,101
1936	1,233	1941	721
1937	818	1942 (November) ..	292
1938	1,185		

At the present time a total of approximately 175,000 acres are being developed under the provisions of the Small Farms Act, 1932-33.

The functions of both the Lands Development Board and the Small Farms Board are now carried out by the Land Settlement Board, *vide* section 39 of the Statutes Amendment Act, 1941.

Land Development and Unemployment.

It will be seen that the development of land has been used as a means to alleviate the distress resulting from unemployment not only by the establishment of unemployed men as farmers, but also by giving useful productive work to large numbers of unemployed.

When development operations were first commenced by the Small Farms Board, the Board made it clear that, as the work was being undertaken solely for the relief of unemployment, the cost of the wages of the workmen engaged should be met entirely from moneys voted for the relief of unemployment, and that the land being developed should not be loaded with the wages-cost. The reasons for this attitude were—

- (1) The inefficient type of labour being used. The men concerned were recruited from the registered unemployed, and in many cases lacked experience in the class of work they were called on to perform, or were physically incapable of performing a good day's work: