

further new development work cannot proceed, and no new grassing other than the sowing of grass out of crop has been carried out since the fertilizer-rationing scheme was instituted. Every possible endeavour should, however, be made to maintain the grassing already established by the application of whatever fertilizer can be made available. In this connection the Department has been rationed in the same manner as private farmers, and the Committee does not suggest that the position should be otherwise. While it is readily conceded that the cropping requirements of the Dominion should have first claim on the available fertilizer-supplies, there appears to be some merit in the proposal for a classification of all grasslands which are top-dressed annually. The question is not without difficulties, but a rationing scheme which would give the light types of country, whether being farmed privately or being developed by the State, a greater proportion of fertilizer per acre than the older-established and better-quality lands would go a long way towards effective maintenance of the former types of land until normal fertilizer-supplies are again available.

The present shortage of phosphatic fertilizer brings forcibly to notice the dependence of our pastoral industries on the importation of phosphatic fertilizer, and the desirability of an investigation into alternative methods for the maintenance of our grasslands.

#### THE USE OF MACHINERY.

During depression years land development was undertaken chiefly as a means of providing productive employment for unemployed labour, and it naturally followed that the use of machinery was restricted to a minimum in order to provide as much manual work as possible for the surplus labour available. The Committee, however, considers that the work is of such importance that in any future operations full advantage should be taken of the use of efficient plant, including plant belonging to private contractors, which, besides being more economical than manual labour, also enables the more expeditious handling of the various types of work involved.

The degree to which plant can be used instead of man-power is governed to a large extent by the contour of the country being handled, and as an example of this is it can be said that there is far more scope for the use of tractors and tractor-drawn implements on the easier Rotorua lands than on the steeper-contoured King-country lands.

#### CONCLUSION.

Speaking generally, all the blocks visited by the Committee could only be brought in by large-scale operations, and the development of these lands is a national undertaking of paramount importance. It must be accepted that most of the land being developed cannot be brought to a fully productive stage at a cost upon which farming activities can be made profitable, and a writing-down to a fair value will be necessary.

The development of similar lands previously has been undertaken by individual settlers who selected the land in its virgin state, and in many cases spent a whole lifetime struggling against the difficulties brought about by lack of capital, in many cases lack of road access, and above all the peculiar problems of holding pasture and preventing reversion. Instances are plentiful of families who have stuck grimly to their holdings through three generations, and it is only the third generation which has been able to farm at a profit. The history of land settlement in New Zealand shows how successive Governments have had to assist settlers continuously by way of concessions in rent, interest, and capital charges, and even then many have failed, and wasted the best portion of their lives in an endeavour to break in and make a farm. In many cases they have also had the benefit of the labour of their families.

The prior development of the land by the State has everything to commend it, and if a settler is established on a fully developed farm, and farms it in accordance with the established rules of husbandry for the district, he has only to look to his own personal efforts to be a successful farmer.

It seems far preferable to develop land in large blocks and write off any costs in excess of productive value than to give an individual a life-long task in breaking in a farm from the raw, during which period he requires liberal assistance, and then only reaps his reward, if at all, in the evening of his life.

The selecting of land suitable for development requires careful consideration, and the time is ripe for a comprehensive survey of the whole Dominion, with a view to classification of all land for the purpose of assessing its utility value. The problems which have been successfully overcome in the King-country are present to a greater degree in other districts in the North Island not visited by the Committee; but it is not suggested that their reconditioning and development should be undertaken as a matter of course. Areas unsuitable for development should be definitely set aside for whatever purpose they are most suited, and development confined only to those areas which can be successfully grassed and maintained. There is scope for the setting-up of a competent authority to classify land according to its utility value, so that each particular type of land can be used according to its real value to the Dominion. It is realized that this may mean the abandonment of certain areas which are at present occupied and which are provided with some social services, but the long view must be taken, and if successful farming is not possible, then the land must be put to some other use.

#### APPRECIATION.

The Committee records their appreciation of the wholehearted assistance and co-operation given by the officials of the Lands and Survey Department during the period of their investigation.

B. ROBERTS, Chairman.

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