

1944
NEW ZEALAND

NATIVE DEPARTMENT

THE DEVELOPMENT AND SETTLEMENT OF NATIVE LANDS AND THE PROVISION OF HOUSES FOR MAORIS

(STATEMENT BY THE HON. H. G. R. MASON, NATIVE MINISTER, UPON THE PROGRESS OF)

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Leave

GENERAL REPORT

IN continuing the story of the growth and expansion of the present policy of Native-land development and settlement and housing-accommodation for Maoris with the aid of loan-moneys provided from State resources and Maori funds for the rehabilitation of the Maori race as a whole, it is useful to preface this report of the activities of the Board of Native Affairs for the year ended 31st March, 1944, with a brief summary of its genesis, and its sociological import both to pakeha and Maori alike. A report upon the functions of the Native Department, apart from land-settlement and housing, is contained in another annual parliamentary paper (G.-9).

In his natural or primitive state the Maori necessarily was compelled to find his living from the slender resources of the country. He had to grow what he could, although the range of products was decidedly restricted, but the land was the source of his livelihood—apart from the food which the forests, the rivers, and the sea provided. His early plantations bore evidence of careful planning with due attention to climate, soils, and situation, and he was able with his crude wooden tools and much labour to cultivate those areas which had to suffice for his purposes. To the accompaniment of appropriate rituals and observances, he planted and harvested, year by year, his food crops, most of which he had originally carried across the wide seas. The early missionaries under Marsden found the Maori to be singularly receptive to European methods of agriculture, and with the introduction of iron implements, wheat-growing was profitably developed during the first half of the nineteenth century. With the rapidly increasing population of the country and the consequent demand for land for European settlement, the Maori was largely encouraged to live upon the proceeds of the alienation of his lands rather than upon the products of their soil, and it was not until the beginning of the present century that the Maori mind was once again turned towards the utilization of the land and suitable measures were adopted to re-establish the people on the ancestral lands then remaining to them, and to educate them in the business of stock-farming. No great measure of success was obtained immediately, but in some districts, perhaps better endowed by Nature than others, and where land-sales had not proceeded to the same extent, considerable progress was made by the Maori farmer—a success which ultimately was to lead, after many years of endeavour, to the present activities in land utilization.

The State's contribution to the sociological experiment of Native-land development and settlement and provision of homes for Maoris has been very considerable and has for its object the manifold purposes of improving the living standards of the Maori race, of absorbing the largest possible proportion of the Maori population into the economic structure, of bringing idle lands into production, of combating or eradicating noxious weeds which are a menace to the surrounding clean country, and of assisting in the payment of county rates. The keynote to this policy, forged over some years, is that of helping people to help themselves—people who have within themselves the desire and capacity to work out their destinies if they are given a helping hand in the early stages of their establishment