

settlers occupying lands under the Government's land-settlement project, was awarded this year to a Hawke's Bay settler at Hastings, a member of the Ngati-Kahungunu tribe, who is undertaking mixed farming comprising fat-lamb raising, grass-seed production, cropping for the canneries, and so on. It is symptomatic of the present days, and at the same time an encouraging fact, that the management over the last year or two of the winning and third-place farms for the 1943-44 competition should have been carried on by the respective wives of the two settlers in question, who are in the Armed Forces, and consequently were only able to visit their holdings at intervals. In making his awards upon the bases of pasture control, stock husbandry, volume of production, conservation of winter feed, condition of fences, cleanliness of sheds and equipment, and general farm-management, the nine contestants were stated by the judge to have done excellent work, the first three receiving special congratulations.

The shortage of man-power and limited supplies of fertilizers, water-piping, and building-materials are the chief factors which have caused a cessation to the extension of land-development activities. The usual amount of top-dressing has not been possible since the restriction on fertilizer-supplies became operative, and the effect on marginal lands is very noticeable. Every endeavour has, however, been made to increase production wherever possible and to maintain the Department's farming enterprises.

The war has no doubt had a very disturbing influence on the Maori people. In most districts patriotism has run high and the majority of able-bodied men have endeavoured to serve in the Armed Forces. Those who have not gone overseas have spent periods in Home Guard camps, and many farms have been managed by women. Usually the milking of the dairy herds has been well carried out by them, but other work such as farm-maintenance and stock-management has not received the proper attention except in a few instances where the women have shown better results than when the farms were managed by their husbands.

The average number of men employed on Board-controlled properties was the same as for the previous year—namely, 1,200. Grants from the Consolidated Fund amounting to £151,700 were the means of enabling the Board to subsidize the work on marginal lands, and also to provide a reasonable standard of living to settlers on properties not yet fully developed, during the winter months, by way of labour subsidies.

Lucrative rates of pay at present being offered in outside industries, the disturbing effect of the war, and the drop in dairy production have caused, amongst a large number of Maori farmers, a state of mind which manifests itself as lack of enthusiasm in the farming operations. The problem of the Department is to re-create the interest which has been lost owing to these causes.

During the year a special committee of investigation was appointed to review the efforts of certain groups of Maori settlers under the Board's control in the Gisborne and Central Rotorua areas. This work may be termed the second phase in Native-land settlement when it becomes necessary to review the results of efforts of the individuals and decide whether they are really suited to the work and whether they be replaced. Several nominations were cancelled, and in other cases remissions of interest were made contingent upon greater diligence being displayed by the settler.

As far as the first stage in the closer settlement of land is concerned, the Department's policy was modified to try to ensure that there be devised some practical test of a Maori's ability to farm successfully a holding on which he may be placed. It is proposed that, in dairy operations, as a general policy every effort be made to appoint share-milkers as soon as pastures are established sufficiently for closer settlement, and that for the time being, in view of their possible inexperience, close supervision and instruction be afforded them by the field staff. It is intended that the share-milker be established as a settler with a definite holding at the end of two years if he reaches the standard of competence demanded of him at the outset.

A commencement in the extension of horticultural pursuits among the Maoris has been made by the appointment of a horticultural expert. With such a wide scope for operations a considerable amount of exploratory work has been necessary, but progress has been made in the promotion of production and in the disposal of crops grown either for the requirements of the Armed Forces or for the local markets. Contracts were arranged for the growing of a quantity of carrots and kumara, with satisfactory results. As with many other activities, operations are limited to a degree by the amount of labour available, but it is proposed that increased quantities of onions, carrots, and potatoes will be grown on contract, thereby guaranteeing the grower against fluctuating markets. Towards the goal of increasing production for home consumption as a contribution to the betterment of living-conditions, instruction by means of demonstrations and talks has been given both in some Native schools and also in a number of Maoris' gardens. A fruit-tree nursery has been established at Tauranga, while on Matakana Island a nursery for trees for shelter-belts and general instruction in market-gardening has been started. The provision of fruit-trees should aid in fostering a sense of pride in the home and introduce more fruit to the average Maori's diet. To meet the scarcity of fencing-timber, the planting of eucalypts suitable for posts has been proceeded with. It is hoped to encourage the growing of flowers and vegetables in the Wairarapa district for commercial marketing.

The past year has again seen little progress made in the way of providing homes for Maoris, due to the emergency conditions arising out of the war operating in the building