

WAIOTAAPI STATION

In the Waiapu County near Tokomaru Bay, 699 acres, being Waipiro A 22b 3 Block, are farmed as Waiotaapi Station. When the management was taken over in 1941 the country was in poor shape and the prime necessity was to renew pastures and fences. As far as possible this has been done, so that the farm now supports 1,002 sheep and 144 cattle. Thirty bales of wool were produced during the past year. Prior to the Native Trustee taking over the management the property had been unsuccessfully used as a dairy-farm.

Probably none of the stations in this district suffered so severely from drought as did Waiotaapi. Being all hill country, pastures were barren at an early stage and stock were reduced to bare existence.

PART IV.—NATIVE HOUSING OPERATIONS

GENERAL

The rate at which new houses are being provided for Maoris has shown a steady increase during the past year, although the general conditions relating to man-power and materials have again proved a serious handicap to attaining the desired annual output of houses.

While all possible assistance has been granted by the Supply and Works authorities in providing supplies, the shortage of key building-materials such as timber, cement, roofing, wallboards, baths, and ranges has enforced a restriction on constructional activities commensurate with the rate of supply to ensure the full employment of workers. This position has been most evident in the matter of timber-supplies, and it is apparent that under the present system of zoned distribution progress will continue to be limited. As an emergency measure where other timbers have not been readily available, the use of *Pinus insignis* timber has been adopted in some districts for certain framing purposes on conditions regarding its use similar to those approved by the Housing Construction Department for State rental houses. Where *Pinus insignis* is used, the approval of both the local authority and the prospective home-owner is first obtained. While the use of substitute materials and construction has been considered to combat the difficulties of the timber position, their use has been prohibitive for various reasons, such as the shortage of cement as a basic material for such substitutes, the heavier costs involved by their use as related to the already limited financial resources of housing applicants, and the limited trade experience of the majority of workers employed or available for such forms of construction.

Negotiations with the various Supply authorities are in progress for an improved basis of supply to meet the heavy programme of work ahead, and it is hoped that early in the coming year this aspect of the housing activities will be considerably improved to the extent that bulk purchase of materials will be facilitated. For this purpose stores and works depots are now being established in key locations throughout all districts.

One of the greatest difficulties confronting the Department, and this is apparent in all branches of the building industry, is the lack of skilled and experienced tradesmen capable of taking charge of building teams and giving trade instruction to the large numbers of unskilled and partially experienced workmen otherwise available. As a result of the preponderance of semi-skilled labour now employed without an adequate proportion of experienced labour, it is found in many cases that labour costs have increased unduly. This applies particularly to Maori housing, where operations are scattered widely throughout country districts.