

C. LAND UTILIZATION

Not all occupied land can be classified as at present developed, or even capable of full development. As at 31st January, 1944, there were approximately 43,000,000 acres of occupied land in the Dominion, of which 23,000,000 (approximately), or 53.86 per cent., were classified as unimproved. This does not mean that this land is unproductive or unused, but rather that it has not been cultivated. The following table shows the total area of this unimproved occupied land in January, 1942, classified as to its coverage :—

Table No. 73.—Table showing Total Area of Occupied Unimproved Land in 1942 classified as to its Coverage

Coverage.					Acres.
Phormium (New Zealand flax)	..	..	..	..	47,264
Tussock and other native grasses	..	..	..	..	13,869,330
Fern, scrub, and second growth	..	..	..	..	4,349,575
Standing native bush	..	..	..	..	2,885,884
Barren and unproductive land	..	..	..	..	2,010,573
Total	..	..	..	..	23,162,626

Some of the phormium area is being cut regularly. A large proportion of the tussock and native grass country is used for extensive sheep grazing, particularly in the South Island, as is also some proportion of the fern, scrub, and second growth country. Some of the standing native bush country is being milled. In general, however, this class of country is in very large holdings and is unsuitable for closer settlement.

As perhaps further indicative of the unsuitability for developmental purposes of this class of land, the following table shows the relative area occupied, cultivated, and unimproved over a period of years :—

Table No. 74.—Table showing the Cultivated, Unimproved, and Occupied Areas at Selected Periods from 1891 to 1944

Year.				Cultivated.	Unimproved.	Total Occupied.
				Acres.	Acres.	Acres.
1891	..	..	..	8,524,662	10,862,867	19,397,529
1896	..	..	..	10,779,226	22,532,986	33,312,212
1901	..	..	..	12,728,617	22,182,956	34,911,573
1906	..	..	..	14,233,629	21,823,731	37,167,460
1911	..	..	..	*	*	*
1916	..	..	..	16,595,590	24,366,603	41,262,193
1920	..	..	..	18,004,776	25,468,303	43,473,079
1925	..	..	..	18,510,558	25,122,714	43,632,372
1930	..	..	..	19,156,074	24,212,579	43,368,653
1935	..	..	..	19,474,519	23,630,040	43,104,559
1941	..	..	..	19,906,656	22,981,681	42,888,337
1944	..	..	..	19,829,999	23,148,310	42,978,309

* Not available.

The above table illustrates the point made earlier that certain areas, while suitable for extensive sheep-farming, are quite unsuitable for intensive farming in smaller areas. The actual area of occupied land has varied little over the past fifty years. The gradual decline since 1920 in unimproved areas, coupled with the gradual extension of the cultivated area, would indicate some slight development, but the extent is relatively unimportant.