

It is not necessary to emphasize the fact that the time has come when the Maori has realized the benefits to be gained from taking his place in the life of the community as a whole, and, as a result, the desire to be self-supporting and responsible members of the nation is evidenced by the movement on every hand to play a full part in all sections of national life. An independent, self-reliant, and satisfied Maori race working side by side with the pakeha and with equal incentives, advantages, and rewards for effort in all walks of life is the goal of the Government, and the realization of such a goal will be of inestimable advantage both to the community at large and also to the economy of the country in the field of production and in the general development of the country.

The Maori birth-rate has shown a steady increase year by year, and in view of the large number of Maori youths entering the employment field annually a scheme for the training of Maori youths, mainly in the building trade in order that opportunities may be found for them in industry, is being instituted. The training scheme will be worked in conjunction with the Department's building operations, and the youths, when trained, will increase the building force of the country.

The question of the living standards of the Maori people is one of great moment. Bearing in mind that the home is the place where character is moulded and lasting impressions made, it will be realized just how important it is to see that adequate housing is provided—housing which will enable the setting-up of the most important and far-reaching influence for good or ill in national life, the home. The results of a survey of housing conditions conducted in conjunction with the 1936 census indicated just how much Maori housing conditions fell short of requirements, and since that time the matter has constantly exercised the minds of all who have been in any way interested in the welfare of the Maori people.

It has been the aim of the Administration during the past year to continue a vigorous housing policy, and the acquisition of homes for the Maori people, whether by erection or purchase, including renovations and repairs, has been an important part of its activities.

One of the most pleasing and interesting features of Maori housing activity is the fact that there are upwards of 300 Maori men and youths engaged in building homes for their own people, and some of these men are the supervisors and overseers of the works. A large number of Maori houses have to be erected in remote areas, and the labour problem is especially acute in these distant places. Nevertheless, all available labour has been used to provide suitable housing for the Maori people. Much remains to be done, however, and an increasing population means an increasing demand for houses, and there can therefore be no let up in this work.

Land development and land settlement have again been furthered in every way possible as it is realized that the full utilization of all available Maori land is of national importance as well as of individual advantage. Clearing, stumping, fencing, draining, roading, and grassing have been carried out in most districts, and in due course Maori farmers have been settled on the areas. In this way the Maori people have been able to make an increasing and effective contribution to the national wealth and to the volume of primary production—production that is of vital importance not only in this country, but also in the campaign for food for Britain. The manner in which many of the Maori farmers are proving their ability in seeking ways of improving their holdings and their stock is a cause for satisfaction. The wool and butterfat produced, plus the returns from the sale of live-stock and horticultural products, are a tangible and worthwhile contribution towards the primary production of this country and represent an excellent record of the efforts of the Maori people both in their endeavours to prove themselves a self-supporting and self-reliant people and in their willingness to shoulder the responsibilities of citizenship as workers together with the Europeans in the economy of the nation.

Production returns at 31st March, 1949, again show an appreciable increase in butterfat and wool produced.