

In pursuance of their functions, Maori Land Boards are at present farming six large stations covering an area of 42,365 acres, the largest being a property of 13,845 acres. On these lands the Boards have carried out a programme of farming and improvements throughout the year, and, in addition to the usual farming operations, fencing, stumping, clearing, and regrassing have been completed and areas brought into a state of usefulness. On one station, Ohuia, very good progress was made during the year, and the mortgage was reduced from £19,306 to £15,540. The financial returns from the Morikau Station, a 12,000-acre property under the control of the Aotea District Board, were again most satisfactory, and a substantial dividend was made available to the beneficial owners.

In all, 1,014 bales of wool were produced on these stations during the year, and the sales of live-stock returned £32,852. The number of sheep carried at 31st March, 1949, was 41,857, and cattle, 4,523.

In a number of cases the Boards hold mortgages over farm properties, and a measure of control is exercised in order to protect the security and at the same time ensure that the Maori farmers are encouraged as much as possible by the helpful advice and practical suggestions of the Department's Field Supervisors. These mortgages involve an area of 82,418 acres.

REHABILITATION OF MAORI EX-SERVICEMEN

The rehabilitation of Maori ex-servicemen into civilian life is a matter of importance, and the Maori Rehabilitation Finance Committee continues to give sympathetic consideration to all applications for assistance received from Maori ex-servicemen. At nine meetings held during the past year the Committee approved expenditure totalling £179,000.

An event of outstanding importance was the settlement of six men on subdivisions of the Huramua Soldiers' Settlement Block. The first ballot held provided one sheep and five dairy farms, and the successful ballotees were all men who had previously been trained on the Huramua property itself. A further ballot will be held next year, when four more farms will be available for settlement. When fully settled it is estimated that this area will provide the following: five dairy-farms, three sheep-farms, one sheep and dairy farm, and nine dairy and small-crop or fruit farms.

The number of Maori ex-servicemen occupying land under Part I of the Maori Land Amendment Act, 1936, is 92, the number placed during the year being 26. Seventy-seven have been settled, 44 through the agency of the Maori Rehabilitation Finance Committee and 33 through the agency of the State Advances Corporation.

The position is set out in detail in Table 4.

EAST COAST MAORI TRUST LANDS

The East Coast Maori Trust continues to function as provided under the Act, and, in pursuance of the authorities conferred on him by statute, the East Coast Commissioner has been responsible for administering a total area of 121,788 acres of vested lands during the past year.

A little less than one-third of the total area is leased, and from the remainder 2,966 bales of wool were produced during the year, which is an increase over the wool produced in the previous year.

There are 6,895 beneficial owners interested in the trust lands, and it is for their benefit that the Trust functions.

During the year a Consultative Committee, composed of the Chairmen of Committees of all the blocks embraced by the Trust, was formed. This Committee has met the Commissioner, and, judging by the results of the conversations, it is evident that a very