

funds through the Native Trustee or Maori Land Boards. It was apparent that these funds would soon be depleted, just when circumstances were conspiring to make the development of their lands by the Maoris and the effective occupation thereof one of the most important problems in the settlement of the lands of the Dominion.

During the 1929 session, when Parliament sanctioned a scheme for the development of unoccupied Crown lands preliminary to selection, it was decided to apply similar provisions to lands owned or occupied by Maoris. To overcome any delays or difficulties arising from the nature of the titles to the lands proposed to be developed, the Native Minister was authorized to bring such lands under the scope of a development scheme. Upon notification of the fact the owners were prevented from interfering with the work of development, and private alienation of any land within the scheme was prohibited. The funds for development were provided by the Minister of Finance through the Native Land Settlement Account. The difficulties as to title were literally stepped over, and the development and settlement of the lands made the prime consideration. The Minister was armed with the most comprehensive powers, which he could exercise directly through the Native Department or delegate to any Maori Land Board or to the Native Trustee. Amendments passed in 1930 empowered the Minister to direct a Board to use its funds for development, and instituted a system of development under the control of the Native Trustee, using the funds in his account. Power was also taken by arrangement between the Minister of Lands and the Native Minister to develop Crown lands that came within the sphere of a Native-land development scheme, thus removing a further obstacle in the way of development.

It may be added that special legislative provision has been made from time to time enabling one or other of the Maori Land Boards or the Native Trustee to undertake farming of specified blocks on behalf of the beneficial owners.

NATIVE-LAND DEVELOPMENT POLICY.

The effective occupation of lands owned and held by the Maori has been urged from different angles at different periods in the history of the Dominion. When the proportion of Native lands to other lands was much greater than it is now the element of the settlement of Native owners upon the ancestral lands was a subordinate and barely appreciable consideration. Nor, in the comparative affluence of those owners from the proceeds of the lease or sale of such lands, did there appear up to the beginning of this century any ground for emphasizing the need of a policy of assisting Maoris to farm their lands. Interest centred rather round the problem of acquisition of land from the Native owners by the State or private individuals, in order that the development or settlement of it might proceed unhampered by the difficulties surrounding Native title. Policy oscillated between the prohibition of alienation to any one but the Crown and the removal of restrictions against acquisition by private individuals. In each case it was assumed that the Native landowners had more than they could possibly use, and could shift for themselves without direction or supervision or financial assistance. The story of the battle of policies is reviewed in detail in the report of the Native Land Commission (parliamentary paper G.—1c, 1907).

But in some Native districts, notably the East Coast, north of Gisborne, where conditions favoured the development of a Maori farming community, the foundations were being laid for the alternative policy, which would aim to encourage and train the Maoris to become industrious settlers. The Native Land Commission (1907—9) had noted in its visits to various districts scattered and ill-organized attempts by Maori communities in industrial and farming pursuits. For want of organization and support many of these had become half-hearted or had failed. The alternative of realizing portions of the tribal estate to meet their needs was resorted to. The general settlement of the country gained, but the problem of dealing effectively with the future of the Maori population by absorbing it into the industrial and economic life of the country was continually postponed.

The Commission already referred to found it necessary to present the case for a policy of assisting the Maori to settle his own lands. The following extract is taken from its general report (G.—1c, 1907, p. 15):—

"The Native-land question at the present juncture cannot be dissociated and considered apart from the well-being of the Maori people. It is not for us to state, but indications all point to the conclusion that for good or ill the next few years will decide the future of the race when the Legislature has determined not only how its surplus lands shall be disposed of, but how the reserves shall be secured against further encroachment, and utilized in a manner above the reproach of those who do not appreciate all the difficulties the Maori has to face in following in the wake of a rapidly advancing civilization.

"To our minds, what is now the paramount consideration—what should be placed before all others when the relative values of the many elements that enter into the Native-land problem are weighed—is the encouragement and training of the Maoris to become industrious settlers. The statute-book may be searched in vain for any scheme deliberately aimed in this direction. The Legislature has always stopped short when it had outlined a scheme or method of acquiring Maori lands or rendering such available in different ways for European settlement. The necessity of assisting the Maori to settle his own lands was never properly recognized. It was assumed that because he was the owner according to custom and usage, and because the law had affirmed his right of ownership, he was at once in a position to use the land. He was expected to do so, and to bear the burdens and responsibilities incident to the ownership of land. Because he has failed to fulfil expectations and to bear his proportion of local and general taxation, he is not deemed worthy to own any