

- (c) Section C, comprising the largest area of the three sections. For the purposes of development an area was demarcated, containing 4,335 acres 2 roods 37 perches, known as Ohaua and Ngahina. This consisted of low fernclad hills on the west side of the Whakatane River, and west of the portion of Section A which was on that side of the river. There were small marshes on this section, and the land was well suited to the method of development pursued on the Horohoro and Waimiha schemes.

Section C provided an outlet for the surplus population of Ruatoki, also scope for the relief of unemployment. As to the remainder of the area brought under the Ruatoki scheme it consisted for the most part of forest lands and poor mountain country. But it included a promising stretch of land in the Owihakatoro Valley, to which settlement might be extended if world prices for primary produce return to a payable level.

The Department acquired a small section of land with a cottage thereon for the Farm Supervisor at a cost of £575.

It took a considerable time to bring the great mass of detail involved in this scheme under proper control, so that the correct treatment might be applied to each part and the whole co-ordinated on sound lines. The Farm Supervisor was assisted by a committee of the leading men in the settlement, and the Maori Land Board at Rotorua kept in close touch with the scheme through constant visits by its officers.

On Section A the expenditure was confined to the supply of dairy stock, fencing-material, seeds, and fertilizers, all labour being supplied by the occupiers of sections without payment. A commencement was made in the development of Section C, such work as draining, roading, and clearing being carried out with assistance from unemployment funds. The Ruatoki Natives adopted in respect of the work on this section of the scheme the policy that Te Puea had followed at Waiuku. An allowance to cover pakeha food was given to a nominated member of a family or group while at work, the equivalent in money appearing as a wage on the scheme wage-sheet. Thus during the financial year ending the 31st March, 1931, out of a total expenditure of nearly £4,500 wages accounted for only £575, and these did not come into the accounts until the next financial period.

The expenditure to the 31st March, 1931, amounted to £4,489. The following details, which are repeated in the schedules to this statement, are given here in order that comment may be made on them: Accommodation for Supervisor, store-shed, &c., £801; purchase of dairy stock, £1,876; fencing-material, £360; grass-seed and other seed and sowing, £531; fertilizers, £757; equipment, £74; horse-feed and sundries, £90; total, £4,489. Included in the purchases were 178 in-calf heifers, 35½ tons of wire, 13,000 lb. of grass and clover seed, 146 tons of superphosphate, some implements and building materials. These details are eloquent of the nature of the assistance required to improve the pastures and the farms on Section A of the scheme.

During the following financial year, 1931-32, the attack on the undeveloped lands of Section C was begun in earnest. The factor of unemployment was taken into consideration, as it was ascertained that a large number of young men were without work. The wage bill for the year, which exceeded £1,800, reflected in large measure the relief afforded. Roading and draining were responsible for £1,141 of the wages; scrub-cutting on Section C, £210; ploughing and cultivation, £187. The sum of £114 was spent in clearing ragwort, a weed that had taken possession of the Whakatane river-bed lands.

The supervision broke down under the weight of detail, and it became necessary to make a change in the last quarter of the financial year. Mr. Rangi Royal, of the Rotorua staff, who was one of the officers specially detailed for consolidation duties at Ruatoki and other parts of the Bay of Plenty, was placed in charge of the Bay of Plenty group of schemes, with headquarters at Ruatoki.

By the end of March, 1932, the expenditure on the Ruatoki scheme had increased to £20,646, made up as follow: Accommodation for Supervisor and store-shed, £1,106; purchase of dairy stock, £6,513; fencing-material, £2,433; grass-seed and other seed and sowing, £3,078; fertilizers, £2,684; roading, draining, clearing, and cultivation, £1,655; and horse-feed, £344; equipment, £349; discharge of liabilities of settlers, £301; sundries, including the cost of herd-testing, £311; and transfer of Crown purchases to the loan accounts of assisted settlers (already explained), £2,943. Against this the settlers paid £1,071. It will be noticed that the purchase of dairy stock accounted for nearly one-third of the expenditure; and that fencing-material, seeds and sowing, and fertilizers absorbed £8,195; and that to secure better titles by ridding them of non-occupiers a charge of nearly £3,000 was incurred. These items justify the unusual length of the introductory paragraphs in which it was sought to explain the many features and elements of this scheme, and to emphasize the need for an all-round improvement in the standard of the farming and in the quality of the stock as well as for the development of idle lands.

The expenditure covered the purchase of 742 heifers and 13 pedigree bulls; of fencing material—namely, 9,240 totara posts, stays, and strainers, over 65 tons of wire and 46½ cwt. of staples; 67,546 lb. of grass-seed; 527 tons of superphosphate. The assembling, storing, and issuing to over one hundred units of these items were exacting tasks, which were not rendered any easier by the need for strict compliance with Treasury regulations relating to the issue of stores. In that connection it was a distinct advantage to have in control of the scheme an officer trained in the service of the Department. He had as assistant the foreman unanimously nominated by the Ruatoki community and appointed by the Minister, Erueti Peene (Edward Biddles), a man in whom the community had the greatest confidence, and who had had long and varied experience in handling men and carrying out every operation relating to the development of land.

The Department insisted on the culling of the herds, and in one season three hundred cows, heifers, and steers were forced out of the settlement, being replaced by heifers from good producing herds purchased in the Whakatane district or from Te Puke or from as far afield as Waikato. The improvement in the pastures due to top-dressing, reseeding and cultivation was most marked, and cropping and haymaking made rapid strides in the farm economy.