

systematic grazing; suitable measures have been taken to control and eradicate ragwort, blackberry, gorse, and other noxious weeds; attention has been given to improved methods of stock husbandry; the programme of building, fencing, draining, and installing water-supply systems has been steadily advanced; and new settlers have been established on holdings sufficiently developed for their occupation. To-day there are seventy-three State schemes in the North Island and three in the South Island for settlement of Native lands and these schemes embrace a total area of 668,885 acres, of which 161,941 acres are in various stages of development. The number of individual units already established at the 31st March, 1936, was 1,388, and it is estimated that these settlers, combined with share milkers, farm hands, and other workers, support a total population of 11,023 dependants.

Climatic conditions varied widely in different parts of the Dominion, but generally the weather was favourable for sheep and dairy farming. Plentiful rains experienced in the spring and summer months resulted in phenomenal pasture growth, and ample feed was available for stock purposes throughout the year. In some districts a continuance of showery weather during the haymaking season affected the supply of fodder for the winter months, and shearing was at times delayed from the same cause, but the vagaries of the weather did not retard cultural operations to any serious extent.

Reference is made in this report to unemployment problems and the measures taken to provide suitable occupation to ameliorate the conditions of unemployed Natives. The policy of the Board of Native Affairs is to utilize, wherever possible, unemployment funds placed at its disposal in subsidizing labour costs on the land-development schemes now in operation, and thus direct the services of Maoris to works of a reproductive nature. Where the settlers are already established on these schemes, but still require assistance, seasonal conditions are met by suitable relief grants which are expended in employing them on their own farms. Failing work on development schemes every effort is made to place Maoris on privately-owned Native lands in which the Department is directly interested as mortgagee, or on other Native lands which may be profitably improved. By means of the contract system the sum of £119,891 was expended on these purposes during 1935-36 out of grants from the Labour Department (late Unemployment Board), and this extraneous assistance considerably accelerated the progress of land development besides affording appropriate work for over three thousand Natives.

The majority of the Natives whose lands are being developed or improved under the ægis of the Department are keenly interested in the success of the schemes established for their benefit and are striving to become independent farmers. In the arduous task of breaking in virgin country they have already shown a capacity for sustained effort under adverse conditions, and now that the productive stage is being reached there is every reason to believe that they will progress under careful and sympathetic supervision. The employment of tribal leaders, wherever possible, as foremen of the various schemes has proved a wise move, and the goodwill and co-operation of men and women of hereditary rank have been vital factors in furthering this new enterprise. The impact of Western civilization has wrought many changes on the communal system of ancient Maoridom, but the influence, the prestige, the mana of chieftainship is still a dominant force, and to-day the recognized leaders of the people are united in their desire to emulate their European neighbours in the art of agriculture.

Accompanying this statement are detailed reports of the various schemes in progress, together with a review of the farming operations of the Native Trustee, the Maori Land Boards, and the East Coast Commissioner—all of which activities are directly or indirectly controlled by the Board of Native Affairs. Tables are also appended giving particulars of expenditure and details of revenue receipts, together with statistical information concerning the lands under development.

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