

Waimiha.

Development operations on the pumice lands in the King Country were commenced in May, 1930, when subdivisions of the Rangitoto-Tuhua Block, comprising 7,872 acres, situated near the Waimiha Railway-station, and approximately forty miles south of Te Kuiti, were brought under the provisions of the Native Land Act as being suitable for dairying. A brief description of this scheme is contained in a report furnished by Mr. P. W. Smallfield, Fields Superintendent, Department of Agriculture, Auckland, in September last, as follows:—

“The majority of the land on the Waimiha Native Development block is good average pumice country, capable of carrying, under proper management, a good rye-grass, white clover pasture—some of the lower river-terraces are poorer, and the swamp areas will be difficult to develop. Of the 2,000 acres which have been developed, some 500 acres are in good rye-grass, white clover, cocksfoot pasture, 100 acres in fair to poor pasture of white clover, cocksfoot, red clover, rye-grass, and bare ground. The immediate problems are the improvement of the pasture swards to the rye-grass, white clover, cocksfoot standard, and the improvement of the live-stock management methods so that the pastures are properly grazed and the returns from live-stock improved. The problem is partly technical and partly administrative; the methods for pasture improvement can be easily outlined, whilst the farm-management problems are more difficult of solution.”

In regard to the farming future and carrying-capacity of Waimiha, Mr. Smallfield said:—

“The pumice land at Waimiha is capable of being developed into fair dairying land with a butterfat production of 100 to 130 lb. of butterfat per acre (under really high farming a butterfat production of 150 to 175 lb. per acre is possible). Successful farming depends on adequate winter feeding; each dairy cow will require about $2\frac{1}{4}$ acres of pasture land, of which about $1\frac{1}{4}$ should be used for summer grazing and 1 acre conserved as hay or silage for winter feeding; or swedes can be used for part of the winter feeding, allowing 1 acre of swedes for every ten cows and $\frac{3}{4}$ acre for hay and silage. Up to the present, dairying at Waimiha has not been very successful, but the position is apparently much better now than in the past. Causes of poor past returns have been lack of water, lack of perennial rye-grass in the pasture, and inadequate winter feeding. An adequate water-supply is absolutely necessary for successful dairying, and I understand that the scheme outlined in the estimates is now being proceeded with by the Public Works Department.”

One of the main difficulties contended with on Waimiha was the deficient natural water-supply, but arrangements have recently been finalized with the Public Works Department for the installation of a gravitation system from a tributary of the Ongarue River. This will necessitate the laying of a $2\frac{1}{2}$ in. pipe under the railway-line near Waimiha Station; the estimated cost of reticulation is £2,691 for a daily water-supply of 10,000 gallons, which will provide for the requirements of twenty-three farms carrying over five hundred head of cattle.

The supervisor reports that the scheme has shown a general improvement during the year, but much better results would have been obtained had the water-supply been completed at the commencement of the season. The condition of the stock generally has improved, partly due to the fact that the cattle are now readily taking the limonite and salt licks, for which special weather-proof boxes have been constructed. The stock returns at 31st March last were as follows: 194 cows in milk, 25 dry cows, 11 bulls, 76 yearlings and heifers, 64 run cattle, and 1,326 sheep.

The progress of development to date may be summarized as follows:—

- (a) Settlement is practically complete on 635 acres on which units are in occupation.
- (b) On 645 acres development is well advanced, but pastures require reconditioning and subdivisional fencing.
- (c) About 800 acres, at present used for grazing, will be gradually settled.
- (d) The balance of the scheme is wholly undeveloped.

The total butterfat produced during the year from 189 cows, milked in seven herds, was 33,624 lb.; graded super, 5,277 lb.; first, 27,166 lb.; and second, 1,181 lb. The average per cow was 178 lb. Haymaking operations, in spite of adverse weather conditions, resulted in the conservation of 270 tons of first-class baled hay, properly stacked and covered, also four pits and three stacks of ensilage.

Besides general farm work the following progress was made during the year: 343 chains of fencing were erected, 164 chains of new drains opened, 108 acres ploughed, 90 acres sown in swedes, and 60 acres of scrub were cut. The wool clip of 23 bales averaged £13 8s. 9d. per bale, and the proceeds from 63 tons of baled hay amounted to £231 13s.

Waimiha maintains a population of seventy-seven Natives, and the health of the settlement has been good. The people are keenly interested in development, and enthusiasm is increasing as settlement progresses. The workers' interest in the scheme is being fostered by the formation of a social and sports club, which should stimulate a healthy *esprit de corps*, characteristic of most tribal communities.