

## TAIRAWHITI MAORI LAND DISTRICT.

Extending from Hick's Bay in the north to beyond Mohaka in the south, the Native land development schemes in the East Coast, Poverty Bay, and Wairoa districts embrace a wide area of fertile lands, the tribal territories of the Ngati-Porou, Te Aitanga-a-Hauiti, Te Aitanga-a-Mahaki, Rongowhakaata, and a section of the Ngati-Kahungunu peoples.

The Tairawhiti district may be regarded as the birth-place of the present policy of developing and settling the lands of the Natives and assisting them in their farming operations—a policy which has for its ultimate object the settlement of the Maori himself as a self-supporting member of the community; the keynote to the achievement of this goal being the re-establishment of the mana or prestige of the tribes which had been deranged with the advent of the civilization of the pakeha. The vision and understanding, which was the basis of the Native land development legislation of 1929, seemed to fan the co-operative spirit of the Maori into activity under the guidance of such policy.

During the pioneering period, when the colony was in the active process of development, the Maoris were content to seek such occupation as was necessary to satisfy their simple needs on works of a public nature, or on European lands in the process of settlement, but meanwhile their own ancestral territories remained idle and undeveloped under common ownership. The vesting of Native blocks in the East Coast Trust, the Native Trustee, and certain special trusts, created for the purpose of liquidating the affairs of Maori estates, led to the preservation and gradual development of certain of these areas in the Gisborne district; prior to 1925, the incorporation of owners and consolidation of interests enabled large tracts of country to be brought into cultivation, and with limited assistance from State Departments and lending institutions, sheep-farming was engaged in by the Natives; the year 1925 marked a forward move when dairying operations were commenced in the Waiapu district with the establishment of the Ngati-Porou Dairy Factory at Ruatoria; but with the passing of development legislation in 1929, there still remained scattered but extensive interests of virgin or partially cultivated Native lands occupied by the owners.

The settlement of these Native lands by means of State development schemes was commenced in the East Coast district in January, 1930, when an area of 13,762 acres was gazetted as being subject to the development provisions of the Act of 1929, and the Mohaka scheme was undertaken. Following this scheme, other blocks were brought under development, and to-day there are seven of these schemes in operation for the settlement of lands owned by the Maoris. Covering a wide area of 59,234 acres of good pasture lands, on which 155 units have already been established, and ten areas are still being farmed as sheep-stations, the success of these schemes is already assured, and with helpful supervision and the continued industry of the people, the consummation of the ideals embodied in the land-settlement policy should be realized.

In reviewing the activities of the past year, the arranging and supervision of contracts for the relief of unemployed Natives provided necessary labour on the development schemes, and, in addition, assisted the owners of interests in scattered private lands in farming their holdings. Without this assistance many acres of idle lands would otherwise have lain idle owing to the prevailing economic conditions, and it is anticipated that still further areas of these private lands will ultimately come under the development schemes and be brought into full production. The rainy season experienced, although beneficial from the point of view of butterfat production, was not favourable for sheep-farming, but nevertheless the wool clip of 610 bales, which realized £6,822, may be regarded as being satisfactory.

During the year twenty-two small residences and seventeen new cow-sheds were erected for units, and the following farming activities undertaken: thirty-nine miles of new fencing were erected, together with the reconstruction of fifteen miles of old fences, 400 acres were ploughed and cultivated, 3,182 acres were cleared of scrub, and thirty chains of river-protection work were carried out in order to prevent river erosion in certain localities, especially in the Waiapu district, where further areas of valuable land are threatened. Protection works of this nature may be regarded as a major activity, entailing substantial expenditure of capital, and consequently the units have been unable as yet to fully finance these works. The operations for the past year also cover the formation of five miles of public roads, and sixty chains of private roads. It is hoped with the aid of the Public Works Department to construct a further seventeen miles of very necessary access roads in the near future.

In addition to work on development schemes, the supervision of unemployment relief contracts on areas not under such schemes was continued. The expenditure of £14,000 in this connection has greatly assisted the owners, and brought into production many acres of uncultivated lands which would otherwise have lain idle.

### *Takatahu.*

"Takatahu" is the local name of the Whetumatarau No. 6 Block which, with the adjoining subdivision No. 5, comprises an area of 418 acres near Te Araroa, consisting of three parts flat and one part of steep hillsides. Prior to coming under the development provisions of the Native Land Act, the lands were included in an order of incorporation under Part XVII of the Act but were not utilized to any extent, and all but 100 acres were in standing bush.

The property has been fully cleared and grassed, and to-day is in good pastures subdivided into fourteen paddocks. It is stocked as a dairying-run and the butterfat produced a return of £769 for the season. The live-stock at 31st March consisted of 7 pedigree bulls, 140 cows, 33 heifers (20 months), 44 weaners, 7 breeding sows, and 39 porkers and weaners. Takatahu is being run by the manager (a married man with five children) and three helpers, one of whom is also married with two dependants, and who is gaining experience with a view to later taking over one of the sections. It is estimated that three dairy-farms can be ultimately established on this scheme.