

Te Kao Dairy Scheme.

The Te Kao lands, vested in the Tokerau District Maori Land Board, comprise the Parengarenga and Pakohu Blocks in the North Auckland District. These were blocks in respect of which the Native Minister had redeemed survey mortgages, and which were vested in a Maori Council by section 3 of the Maori Land Claims Adjustment Laws Amendment Act, 1904. By section 287 of the Native Land Act, 1909, these lands were brought within Part XV of the Act of 1909, and are now within Part XV of the Act of 1931.

The Te Kao Native settlement on these blocks lies on the shores of the Parengarenga Harbour, about forty-five miles to the north-west of Awanui and about twelve miles from the nearest European settlement. The population consists of about 330 Natives—men, women, and children—who are occupying approximately 4,325 acres of land which may be classed as being one-third good flat or drained raupo swamp, one-third sandy gum country, and the balance clay or very light semi-volcanic soil.

By the end of 1924, gum-digging had ceased at Te Kao and the people, members of the Aupouri tribe, were in dire distress. They were living in crude corrugated-iron shacks, many of them being without floor or lining, the families were ill-nourished and the infantile death rate was one child in every four under twelve months old. The President of the Tokerau District Maori Land Board was asked to investigate the position, and following on his report a dairy-farming scheme was commenced for the betterment of the Natives.

The progress of the scheme from its inception is full of interest. The raupo swamps were drained, cleared, ploughed, and grassed. Permanent pastures were gradually established on the hill slopes. Live-stock was supplied to the settlers as soon as their holdings became sufficiently developed to start dairying. A store was established by the Board in order that the people could purchase the necessaries of life at a reasonable cost. It was followed by a motor-lorry service for conveyance of cream to Awanui—a distance of forty-five miles—where the nearest dairy factory was located. In place of the usual meeting-house a hall, with dining-room and kitchen attached, was erected to supply the community needs of the people. Housing conditions were improved, and gradually the efforts of the Tokerau Board to change a poverty stricken group of gum-diggers into a progressive community of Maori farmers bore fruit.

All this effort, spread over a period of eleven years, has involved heavy expenditure, and at the 31st March last the settlers' indebtedness to the Tokerau Board for advances and interest outstanding was £26,107. In addition, expenditure of a general nature amounting to £3,780 has yet to be apportioned, and plant and implements valued at £1,500 have been supplied by the Board. The store has shown a trading profit of £400 for the year under review and its assets, including buildings, appear in the books at £1,800. A small profit has also resulted from the cream lorry service for 1935-36.

Reports for the past year reveal that the season has been a favourable one for the Te Kao Settlement, a wet summer having admirably suited the light nature of the soil. Areas of peat swamp that have been drained under unemployment relief contract, have dried out, and in most cases have been sown in grass. Indeed, the whole of such areas would have been sown in pasture, but the inclement weather, although favourable generally to the settlement, did not allow the surface of the swamps in places to dry sufficiently to burn for a seed-bed. The butterfat produced for the season extending from July, 1935, to April, 1936, amounted to 58,620 lb., being an increase of 5,090 lb. over the previous period. Last year there were fifty-two units under the scheme, of whom forty were supplying cream to the dairy factory. Under unemployment relief contracts, 150 acres of semi-tidal flats were stop-banked.

A difficulty encountered in the area is the disposal of surplus dry and culled stock, and in this connection it is proposed to build a stockyard in the settlement at which auction sales of local, or any outside stock, could be held, the usual rate being levied on all sales. Arrangements are accordingly being made for a suitable yard to be erected. With the steady improvement being effected to the road between Awanui and Te Kao (a distance of forty-five miles), a big reduction should be achieved in the cost of running the Board's cream service.

Repayment to the Tokerau Board for advances to the units is effected by assignments of monthly cream cheques, the proportion ranging from one-fourth to one-third. At the present time these recoupments are insufficient to meet the interest charges in full, and the financial position of the Te Kao dairying scheme cannot as yet be regarded as satisfactory.

Anaura Station.

Situated on the East Coast about seven miles from Tolaga Bay, and comprising 5,865 acres, this property was vested in the Tairāwhiti District Maori Land Board in 1929, in trust for three hundred Maori beneficial owners who, desiring to obtain possession and management of their lands, were unable to meet the compensation moneys for the improvements effected by the European lessees. The area is chiefly hill country of a sandstone and clay formation, and although originally carrying light bush and manuka scrub, it is now cleared and in pasture with the exception of a small portion consisting of hill top. Wide, open valleys aggregating about 400 acres of heavy swamp flats are in the course of being developed and are already showing good results.