

PART I.—STATE DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES.

THE most important of the schemes now in operation for the development of the lands of the Maori people, and for assisting them in farming, are those which are financed out of moneys provided by the State and which are administered by the Board of Native Affairs, under the authority of Part I of the Native Land Amendment Act, 1936, which repealed and replaced section 522 of the Native Land Act, 1931.

For purposes of administration these schemes are grouped in Maori Land Board districts, and it is proposed in this part of the report to review their operation during the past year. It may be mentioned by way of introduction that there are three classes or kinds of schemes which come under the above heading, viz. :—

- (1) Land-development schemes : Which have for their object the development and settlement of blocks or compact areas of Native land—*e.g.*, Horohoro and Waimiha.
- (2) Unit development schemes or settlers' farms : For further developing small holdings of lands already settled on or being farmed by Native individuals or families—*e.g.*, Bay of Islands and Ruatoki.
- (3) Base farms : Which have been established for the purpose of assembling, holding, and distributing live-stock to surrounding schemes—*e.g.*, Manukau Farm.

TOKERAU MAORI LAND DISTRICT.

North Auckland, washed by the waters of the Tai Tokerau—the Northern Sea—has always been a district of importance in the Maori mind. Here the early voyagers from Hawaiki often made their landfall, and again their point of departure on setting forth for their island home, as is witnessed to this day by the name Hokianga-a-Kupe—the departing place of Kupe—the most celebrated of Polynesian navigators. Not only did their canoes make North Auckland the point of approach, but also the souls of their dead journeyed to Cape te Reinga (Spirits Bay), and thence passed into the unknown.

The population of the northern peninsula, representing the ancient domains of the Ngati-Whatua, Ngapuhi, Te Rarawa, Ngati-Kahu, and Te Aupouri peoples, is to-day estimated at 20,500 Natives. It must have been considerably more in early times, and even in Captain Cook's day it was extensive, but the earlier evidence of the hill forts at Ohaeawai, Pakaraka, and elsewhere, shows that the population, even a century ago, was then but a remnant of what it must have been. Even so, the earliest representatives of European civilization found the country populated by a stalwart and warlike people anxious to learn what the pakeha had to teach them. History relates the variety of lessons learned from the early adventurers, the whaler, the trader, lessons not always exemplary to the savage scholar, but, withal, tempered by the true principles of Christianity and the influence of the missionary.

The first epoch of the impact of European civilization on the Maori life was, on the whole, filled with stirring events. Ushered in by some years of bloodshed and strife, when the strongest Maori chief was he who possessed the greatest number of muskets, the day when the Treaty of Waitangi was signed in 1840 at the Bay of Islands must be regarded as of far-reaching importance in the latter-day annals of the Maori race. The treaty was his Magna Charta, the guarantee of his freedom and security. Henceforth the river of Maori life was to follow a new course—the course of progress. At times advancement has been slow and even seemed to have stopped, but the current in the main has flowed steadily on. The flag of progress hoisted on H.M.S. "Herald" off Russell in 1840 still flies undaunted, even though it has been obscured at times by the smoke of sacked and burning Kororareka and the battle cloud of Ruapekapeka.

Slowly, therefore, times were changing, perhaps a little slower in North Auckland than elsewhere, owing to its comparative isolation, but nevertheless surely. The whaler had departed, but his doubtful influences had remained—the settler colonist had arrived; there was bush to be felled; fences to be erected; gum to be dug; and a host of activities where the Maori could and did play his part. He did wonderful work in the bush, the farms and mills of Tokerau, but with few exceptions his remaining lands lay undeveloped. The remnants of his communal cloak were still upon him, and it prevented him, by reason of the title, from working his land as an individual, decreeing that his earnings in working for the pakeha should be shared and not saved.

A definite movement in recent years to end this impasse is seen in the consolidation schemes of the Native Land Court. Briefly, the schemes aimed at the marshalling of scattered individual or family interests into workable areas. After consolidation, land-development was to follow. In the early stages of this programme development materially assisted consolidation by providing an incentive, but, unfortunately, the former is at present hampered by the incomplete consolidation of the lands, which latter process is tedious, requiring skilled and experienced staffs, which, owing to the pressure of other activities, have not lately been available. The devising of a means to speed up the progress of consolidation provides a problem, the solution of which will require to be found.