

IKAROA DISTRICT.

An account of the two schemes, the management of which is delegated to the Ikaroa District Maori Land Board, is as follows:—

Heretaunga.

Designated a "blanket" scheme and embracing an area of 2,000 acres which supports seventeen assisted Maori farmers with seventy-eight dependants, the farms embraced herein are situated over a wide area in Hawke's Bay, the greatest number being in the vicinity of Hastings. The settlers comprised in this scheme were originally Maori farmers who had been more or less established for a number of years, but who, during the recent economic depression, suffered through lack of finance. The Natives of this locality have had considerable experience in agricultural and pastoral pursuits, and consequently there is little work of a developmental nature necessary, the main requirements being manure, fencing materials, and extra stock.

The indebtedness of this undertaking is being rapidly liquidated, and it will not be long before these farmers will be entirely self-supporting.

It is interesting to compare the figures representing the advances since the inception of the scheme in August, 1931, with the total indebtedness as at the 31st March, 1937. The advances reached their highest peak in the year 1934-35, when they stood at £2,232. Advances for the years 1935-36 and 1936-37 totalled £867, making a total advance at 31st March, 1937, of £3,099, while the amount actually owing at that date was £1,475, revealing a repayment of £1,624 in two years.

In the case of seven units there has been practically no expenditure during the year, and their debts have been substantially reduced with the proceeds of milk cheques. One unit has a credit balance, and four unit accounts have been closed, but as there is a possibility of further advances being required no action has been taken relative to excluding these five units from the provisions of Part I of Native Land Amendment Act, 1936.

The live-stock on the scheme at 31st March last was 196 cows, 13 bulls, and 15 horses. The Department's portion of the cream cheque (one-third) was £579 from a total butterfat poundage of 32,510 lb., while £237 sundry receipts were credited to the scheme, of which £120 was obtained from the cropping and sale of rye-grass.

An improvement is noticeable in the attention being taken in the farming of these areas, and with the increasing inquiries it is expected that, as areas now leased become available again to the owners, no difficulty should be experienced in placing more Maoris back on the land.

The record of work to date shows that eight cow-sheds and four cottages have been erected.

Manawatu.

Taking its name from the rich farming district in which it is situated, this scheme covers an area of 809 acres, of which 617 acres are under development. There are five unit holdings, which support 44 dependants. One of these settlers liquidated his indebtedness during the year, but nevertheless further development for a year or two is necessary before the farm will be self-supporting.

The live-stock tally for the whole of the scheme is shown in a following table, the units' tally being 88 cows and 14 heifers and weaners. The total butterfat-production was 27,369 lb., from which the Department retained its proportion of £770.

Included in the scheme is the Matarapa block of 368 acres located at Foxton, which area was brought under development in 1931 for the purpose of giving relief work to unemployed Maoris in that district. To-day the block is no longer required for this purpose as the revival of the flax industry and the Whirokino Road deviation have provided avenues of employment for the majority of the physically fit men. An area of approximately 20 acres was sown in marram grass to check sand-drifts and 6 acres of lucerne were established. Other works undertaken were of a maintenance nature—repairing stop banks, rush-grubbing, and checking the spread of noxious weeds (goat's rue and gorse), and also draining and rabbit-poisoning, while 30 chains of new drains were dug. There are 6 houses and 4 cow-sheds built to date, 3 cottages having been built during the year under review.

The season, as far as the Matarapa section was concerned, was a bad one; the fertile portion of the block is low-lying, and parts of it were affected by the wet season.

Access to Matarapa at present is best obtained by means of a boat from Foxton Wharf. The land varies in quality from rich alluvial to a sandy loam. The river-flat has been stop-banked, but goat's rue is growing strongly on this area. This noxious weed, together with the gorse on the sandy loam, will require constant attention.

With further improvements and the planting of shelter-trees and barberry hedges the whole block should ultimately be sufficient to provide a living for five families.

SOUTH ISLAND DISTRICT.

The headquarters of this Maori Land Board, to which is delegated the management of the three South Island schemes, is in Wellington, and, in view of the distances involved, the necessary supervision has, as previously mentioned been undertaken by local officers of the Lands and Survey Department.

The schemes in operation are widely diverse in character, two schemes being at the northern end and one at the extreme south. One of the most interesting ventures is that at Wairau, near Blenheim.