

IKAROA MAORI LAND DISTRICT.

The confines of this district, commencing at the capital city, Wellington, extend up the west coast of the North Island to the Rangitikei River, thence the boundary-line follows approximately a north-easterly direction touching the Ruahines and crossing the Ahimanawa Range, when the line turns east and follows the Mohaka River to the sea. Within the district are located the Manawatu, the greater part of Hawke's Bay, and the Wairarapa, the ancient domains of the Ngati-Apa, Rangitane, Muaupako, and Kahungunu tribes, afterwards dispossessed of much of their land by the invading Ngati-Toa and their allies led by Te Rauparaha.

Development of Land.—There has been a very substantial increase in developmental activities in this district during the year just closed, as evidenced by the fact that two new major schemes have been commenced—Rakautatahi and Makirikiri—comprising some 2,800 acres, together with a number of smaller blocks in the Hawke's Bay aggregating 1,600 acres. The gross area gazetted is 7,247 acres, of which 4,525 acres are occupied by thirty-three settlers. The additional labourers number forty-five, and the dependants of the settlers and workmen total 176. The number of Bureaux workers engaged on privately owned Native lands was 267.

It is most apparent that an old prejudice against allowing the Department to develop their lands is being dissipated amongst the Maoris, who are now becoming more and more convinced of the benefits of State aid towards improving their farms and developing virgin country. Several further blocks are being offered for development in the Hawke's Bay district, and will be investigated as soon as possible. Altogether development has taken its normal course, with the usual setbacks occasioned by floods in Hawke's Bay and the vicissitudes of farming generally. Owing to the wide area over which the various schemes are scattered in this district, certain difficulties are experienced in supervision, which necessitates extensive travelling by the supervisors.

Employment Promotion.—The total number of Maoris assisted from the Employment Promotion Fund in this district for the year under review was 323 men, who were engaged in all classes of work. Of special interest is the attempt to train unemployed Maoris in the use of carpentering tools, as is mentioned in the section of this report dealing with Native housing (Part I).

The total amount of wages paid for the Ikaroa district was £14,142, of which £373 was expended on development schemes, while £13,769 was paid in respect of private contracts on Native lands.

Heretaunga.

This is a "blanket" scheme extending over a wide area in Hawke's Bay from Takapau to Tangoio, and comprising 2,462 acres, with nineteen holdings supporting 102 people in all. Most of the land is of good quality, and in the year under review 60 chains of new drains have been completed together with 460 chains of new fencing and repairs. Three new settlers have been established.

The live-stock tallies are as follows: 164 cows, 30 other dairy stock, 1,082 breeding-ewes, and a few dry sheep.

Very little trouble is experienced with noxious weeds, which are kept well under control. Most of the settlers are established farmers, and an increase in production can be anticipated as the herds are improved. One bad flood occurred, and damage was caused to the extent of £600 through loss of fences, crops, and silting of pastures.

Manawatu.

Comprising six settlers' holdings in the Manawatu district embracing 645 acres, and the Matakara Block of 368 acres, this scheme contains land of good quality and is practically all ploughable. One new settler was established last year, making the total of established farmers six who, together with twenty additional labourers, support sixty-two dependants.

A certain amount of trouble is still evident on Matakara Block in regard to flooding and the difficulty of adequately draining the area. The land, however, is of excellent quality and will ultimately provide four holdings, although at present only two share-milkers are employed.

The live-stock tallies for the whole scheme are as follows: 177 cows, 38 other dairy stock, and a number of pigs. The year's work included 270 chains of fencing, 38 acres of grassing, and other farm-maintenance work.

Rakautatahi.

Gazetted in September, 1937, this is a new scheme comprising 1,945 acres of second-class land situated about four miles from Norsewood, towards the Ruahine Ranges. It is all fairly easy country, but is traversed by two steep-sided gorges. The bush was milled and burned some twenty-five years ago and poorly sown, and as the property has been unoccupied for about six years the fern has taken charge. It was previously leased to a Native sheep-farmer, who was forced to abandon the property during the slump. Development has just commenced, and the place when fully improved should support twelve to fourteen settlers. An area of 120 acres has been stumped and logged-up and a start made with the fencing of the area. All the present work is being accomplished with eight Bureaux workers under the direction of one prospective settler, and the men have been provided with three hutments, which will ultimately be shifted as required, and used for outbuildings on the farms. With the exception of two working-horses there is no stock on the property.