

PART III.—MAORI LAND BOARD UNDERTAKINGS.

The Maori Land Boards are empowered by statute to make advances from their Common Funds for the purpose of assisting Maori farmers to develop and improve their lands, and a Board may, out of funds at its disposal, purchase and farm lands, and may guarantee the accounts of Native dairy-farmers with any co-operative dairy company. In addition to advancing money on mortgage to Natives, a Maori Land Board may, with the consent of the beneficial owners, carry on any agricultural or pastoral business, or any other business or occupation connected with land and the produce thereof, on behalf of and for the benefit of the owners or such Natives as may be interested in the business carried on.

As in the case of the Native Trustee, the Board of Native Affairs exercises control over the investment on mortgage, or otherwise, of moneys in the account of a Maori Land Board, and the management of all such investments, and over the expenditure on all farming operations undertaken by a Maori Land Board.

Since coming into operation the policy of the Board of Native Affairs has been to exercise a general measure of control over the expenditure incurred on the schemes and farming ventures undertaken by the Maori Land Boards, and for this purpose an annual budget, or estimate of expenditure, for the ensuing year is submitted, together with the trading accounts for the past year. The direct management of these farming operations is left to the discretion of the Maori Land Board concerned, and the services of field officers attached to the Department are always available for supervision purposes. With regard to advances upon mortgage to individual Natives, the securities submitted are subject to the approval of the Board of Native Affairs, and the subsequent management of these investments is generally delegated to the particular Maori Land Board concerned.

Two sheep-stations and a dairying scheme are being carried on under this heading, and the following is an account of the activities for the past year :—

Anaura Station.

This property, which is farmed as a sheep and cattle station by the Tairāwhiti District Maori Land Board, comprises an area of 5,865 acres situated on the East Coast seven miles north of Tolaga Bay.

Anaura is chiefly hill country of a sandstone and clay formation, and was originally covered with light bush and manuka scrub which has been cleared, and the land sown down in pasture. During the year 450 acres were cleared of young scrub, and 40 acres of rushes, while gorse, variegated thistle, and other weeds received attention.

Unfortunately, the fences which had been thoroughly renovated during the year suffered considerable damage as a result of the severe floods experienced in the autumn, and the Board will incur fairly heavy expense in effecting the necessary repairs. The floods were responsible also for a considerable amount of silting on the flats, and it will be necessary to regrass about 40 acres or 50 acres. Although the low-lying country was flooded several times, the stock was removed in time to higher country and no losses were reported as a result of the heavy rains experienced.

Despite the wet season, sheep have done fairly well, lambs fattened in anticipated numbers, and the annual draft of aged ewes was up to the usual standard. The station is carrying 4,905 breeding-ewes and 930 head of cattle. The ewes are a particularly good line. The cattle are in good condition, and no difficulty is anticipated in carrying through the winter the number now on the station.

The wool-market has been disappointing, the proceeds from 180 bales only realizing about two-thirds of the amount of the last season's clip, but the quality was up to the usual standard.

Te Kao Dairy Scheme.

As mentioned in previous reports, the development of this isolated area was undertaken in order to provide some avenue of work for the local Natives, who up to that time had been able to earn a livelihood on the gum-fields. As a result of the collapse of the market for kauri-gum, these people were in distress and, although their lands were extremely poor in quality, the situation demanded the development of these lands. Work was undertaken in 1925, under the control of the Tokerau Maori