

and at the 31st March, 1938, there were thirty-four houses completed and twenty-one in the course of erection. In addition, the Department's supervisors have carried out the erection of sixty houses, and an extensive cow-shed programme is in hand.

Instructions were issued that the sale of bobby calves was to be strictly limited, in an effort to avoid the heavy annual charge for stock replacement, and that all proceeds of bobby-calf sales were to be paid into the Department. It has been difficult to train the Natives to raise their calves well and improve their herds, and stock replacements have suffered. On the other hand, of course, some of the smaller areas do not permit the raising of stock.

A greater degree of understanding and appreciation of the State's activities and difficulties appears to prevail among the general public, and very little criticism has been heard. Indeed, the Department's activities have given rise to some favourable comment. An example is quoted from some remarks made by the Bishop of Aotearoa after a visit to the district. His Lordship is reported in the daily press as follows:—

“The improved conditions ruling among the Maoris of the North were attributed by Bishop Bennett to the development schemes, particularly small dairy-farms. They have proved an inestimable temporal blessing to the Maori race wherever established in the Dominion.

“‘Every able-bodied man,’ he stated, ‘was working with the more cheerful outlook which has developed out of the abundance of work with the consequent better wages, regular food and hours of work. The Maori race was fitter physically and even increasing rapidly.’”

Following a heavy wet winter, when floods predominated in all parts, the North experienced a warm spring which considerably benefited the pastures and tended to increase production. Unfortunately, the dry weather developed into a mild drought, and pastures suffered and the earlier promise of increased production was checked. In certain exceptional cases it was essential to relax the employment regulations and to give a greater measure of assistance than was originally contemplated.

In all areas the stock is in first-class condition, the type taken right through being good. Butterfat production is still low per cow. The necessary self-reliance and ambition to make themselves independent of relief assistance is in many cases lacking. The offer of private employment tempts many to neglect their farms, with the result that the women and children are left to do the milking and farm-work.

Nearly one hundred men from this district accepted development work with the Department at Rotorua, and this eased the unemployment position considerably. With the improved organization and the increase in private employment, it is now difficult to get men in certain localities to do the work offering.

Active development work was commenced at Ounuwhao, a large Native block near Dargaville; also at Okaroro on a Native lease that was taken over for the benefit of the owners; and a large block of Native land, known as Opapaki, at Motatau. The promise of assistance to Natives of Te Hapua was fulfilled, and extensive work has been commenced at Ngataki, in the far North.

There are 450,000 acres gazetted as being subject to the development legislation, and to date 791 settlers have been established on their own holdings.

Bay of Islands.

There are 33,200 acres of land in this district under active development, of which area some 26,672 acres are in grass or rough feed. The quality varies considerably, but, generally speaking, the country is poor, but in isolated localities there are areas of easy undulating volcanic land, flat alluvial lands, and in the centre of the district an area of good hilly limestone country; otherwise the land varies from medium to very poor gum country, being very difficult of development.

The land-title-consolidation position here is not satisfactory, and the housing situation is similarly unsatisfactory. It is hoped to bring about some improvement in these respects during the coming year.

There are 228 settlers established, and 280 other men employed on the scheme, which supports 2,349 other dependants. The live-stock tallies as at 31st March, 1938, comprised 6,100 dairy stock, 216 run cattle, and 750 breeding-ewes.

Hokianga.

It has a considerable Maori population, and some of the most progressive of the Native settlements are to be found in this locality, particularly in the vicinity of the harbour and its tributaries. The Natives of southern Hokianga at Waimamaku, Opononi, and Whirinaki particularly have benefited from contact with the early colonists and have put into practice the lessons learned to a more marked degree than is to be found elsewhere in the North. The living conditions and health of the people are generally good; the farms are such as would do credit to any European farmer; and, from the purely financial side, the settlers' liabilities to the Department are relatively small. The Native rating question here is not satisfactory to the County Council. The Maori has an inborn objection to the payment of rates, but efforts are being made to adjust the position and to assist the county in collecting from those settlers whose properties are in a position to pay.

Herd-testing of the Native herds was carried out during the season in five localities. The supervisor of the Hokianga Herd Testing Association reports that returns, although not up to the average European standards, are satisfactory.