

LAND-DEVELOPMENT UNDER LAND LAWS AMENDMENT ACT, 1929.

Operations under the land-development scheme have been continued during the year, and the progress of recent years has been well maintained. The Waihau Block, containing 963 acres, in the Hawke's Bay District, was brought under the scheme, and considerable progress has already been made in the development of this block.

The total net expenditure for the year on development was £31,443.

The financial assistance available to Crown tenants continues to be one of the scheme's important features, and the number of settlers who are receiving assistance in this way now totals 506. During the year a total of fourteen new loans were authorized. A total of £233,400 has been advanced for improvements and stock, and many of the tenants have now so consolidated their positions that their advances have been converted into instalment mortgages providing for repayment over a 36½-year term.

Pursuant to section 10 of the Land Laws Amendment Act, 1929, the following summary of operations during the year ended 31st March, 1939, is recorded:—

(a) THE SEVERAL AREAS OF UNOCCUPIED CROWN LANDS IN RESPECT OF WHICH DEVELOPMENT WORKS HAVE BEEN UNDERTAKEN DURING THE YEAR.

North Auckland Land District.

Batten's Block, of 1,524 acres, was formerly a discharged soldier settlement property, but is now being farmed and developed under the scheme. Development has as yet been confined mainly to scrub-cutting and fencing, and by this means, together with a systematic programme of top-dressing, the carrying-capacity is being built up.

Kapiro Block, containing 12,000 acres, is situated north of Kirikiri, in the Bay of Islands district. At present 30 acres in this block are being experimented with, and the present excellent strike of grass on this small area indicates that if the pasture can be maintained the successful future of this block is assured. It is proposed to increase the area to be grassed to 100 acres so that full information can be obtained as to the cost of development as well as the carrying-capacity of this particular class of land.

Auckland Land District.

Galatea Estate, comprising 22,326 acres, was purchased by the Crown in 1931, and development operations have continued since that date till a stage has now been reached where the cost of most of these activities is being met by the station revenue. Apart from the ordinary sales of sheep and cattle, a total of 1,200 bullocks were sold as chillers during the year, and the stock carried on the station on 31st March, 1939, was 15,000 sheep and 4,650 cattle. A water-supply scheme for the northern end of the estate was commenced, and progress during the year was sufficient to enable this area to be efficiently grazed. Although development operations have now reached an advanced stage a few years will elapse before all the pastures can be classed as consolidated, but experience has already shown that even under existing conditions dairying on this block can be carried on successfully, although the lighter portion of the estate suffers seriously during dry seasons.

Hawke's Bay Land District.

Kaheka Estate, of 10,048 acres, reverted to the Crown on the expiry of the leases granted before purchase of the blocks. Development during the year was confined mainly to fencing and scrub-cutting, but a considerable amount of fencing was damaged by floods in April and this had to be repaired. Carrying-capacity has been increased, and 11,725 sheep and 1,588 cattle were being carried on 31st March, 1939. Wool sold during the year realized £2,652, and sales of stock returned £5,730.

Kakariki Estate is a purchased estate of 19,288 acres at Kotemaori. Rapid progress continues to be made in the development of this estate, and 900 acres of second-growth scrub have been cleared and 100 acres stumped since the 1st April, 1938. That the pastures are being well maintained is indicated by the fact that over 200 tons of manures were spread during the year, and the stock carried has now been increased to 18,297 sheep, 1,444 cattle, and 47 horses. Four hundred and eleven bales of wool sold for £4,556, and the return from the sale of stock was £6,223.

Parinui Block, comprising 1,044 acres, has been improved very considerably during the short period of two years which has elapsed since development operations were first extended to this settlement. An increase of over 50 per cent. in the stock carried has been shown. Excellent results have been obtained from systematic top-dressing, and subterranean clover has been established on over 400 acres. The lambing percentage this year was the highest on record for the settlement, and the wool per sheep and prices obtained were also well above the average.

Waihau Block, of 963 acres, came under the land-development scheme for the first time this year and much progress has already been made. Approximately 345 acres of heavy scrub have been felled burnt and surface sown, and subterranean clover is being established on some 200 acres. Extensive improvements and renovations have been effected and a comprehensive fencing programme has been completed. At present 880 sheep and 40 cattle are being carried.

Taranaki Land District.

During the year the Tapuwae Estate, of 3,350 acres, which was being developed under this scheme, was taken over by the Small Farms Board. Since then development operations in this district have been confined chiefly to the Whangamomona Block, of 4,581 acres, and other abandoned properties. The productive capacity of these properties is being increased, and the stock at present carried comprises over 6,500 sheep, 680 cattle, 189 calves, and 56 dairy cows.