

- (c) The evidence before us suggests that the terms of some Maori leases are such that they do not encourage the best maintenance of the land. We have stated that maintenance of the land is the prime consideration for the nation, and we think that leases of Maori land should conform to a type which provides reasonable security and welfare for both tenant and owner and which definitely encourages and secures the maintenance and improvement of the condition of the land.

(v) MACHINERY POOLS FOR PRIVATE-LAND DEVELOPMENT

To assist in land-development work on land which is owned privately and is being developed privately we think a great step forward can be taken with the establishment of machinery pools by the Ministry of Works, possibly in conjunction with the Marginal Lands Board. The average private farmer who has some development to do cannot afford to buy a machine for the job. When a private contractor buys the machine the cost to the farmer often seems to us to be too high. On the other hand, when the Ministry of Works buys the machine and operates it at cost, the charge to the farmer seems to be reasonable. We think that there is, therefore, an urgent need for several machinery pools to carry out work such as stumping, clearing the land, and making bulldozed tracks to give access to hill country for top-dressing purposes. In addition, a large amount of drainage-work could be done in this manner.

(vi) POWER TO TAKE BADLY-FARMED LAND

During the course of our investigations we have seen many areas of good farming land lying under a mass of scrub, gorse, and other noxious weeds. These are a direct loss to the nation. In addition, they are a menace to the surrounding farmers who are trying to farm their land well. We consider that where any farmable land is lying unproductive, or in such an impoverished condition that its production is far below the standard for that land, and good reasons do not exist for such a state of affairs, the Director-General of Lands should have power to purchase the property at a price set by the Valuation of Land Court. Action of this description should not be taken until the farmer concerned has had at least twelve months' notice of the intention to take over the property unless satisfactory improvements have been put in hand in the meantime by the farmer. If the landholder will not sell, the Director-General should apply to the Valuation of Land Court for an order for the transfer of the property to the Crown at that price, and the Court should be empowered to make and issue such an order. We consider that the Land Court will be in the best position to determine such matters. In all these matters the Director-General of Lands should only proceed with the approval of the proposed Sheep Industry Board.

(vii) RECOGNITION OF GOOD HUSBANDRY

In addition to the Department of Lands being given the power to penalize bad husbandry, there must be an application by that Department of a policy of rewarding good husbandry. The present policy of the Department definitely penalizes good husbandry inasmuch as the farmer who improves his land faces the prospect of having part of it taken away. The Director-General of Lands has told us that the exigencies of discharged-soldier settlement have forced the present policy of taking improved land