

Stock, Grass-seed, and Fertilizers.

The summary of expenditure given above shows that £68,746 was spent on these items. In the early stages of the various development schemes it was left to the local Boards and farm supervisors to arrange for the purchase of the main requirements in general conformity with the regulations of the Stores Control Board. It was very difficult to effect a proper co-ordination in regard to purchases or to formulate details of requirements in anticipation of the development work proceeding on the various schemes. The latter were springing up at different times in different localities; they were dissimilar in many respects; farm practice varied from district to district or according to the ideas of individual supervisors. An examination of the vouchers for seed and fertilizers revealed a great discrepancy in the prices paid for seeds of the same kind and quality. The variation in the costs of manures was quite noticeable. In regard to dairy stock it was quite apparent that better organization could have saved a considerable amount of money.

It was therefore decided to adopt a system of bulk purchase in regard to the main requirements of all development schemes. The Boards and supervisors were instructed to submit estimates in detail based on field inspections of all operations in progress, and arranged in relation to seasonal conditions. The local budgets would provide detailed progress reports regarding the development work and enable the Head Office to frame reliable financial estimates. With details organized in this manner the Head Office was placed in a position to make comprehensive arrangements with seed-growers as well as merchants or fertilizer companies. Acting through the local Maori Land Board, rye-grass seed was purchased last summer direct from growers in Poverty Bay. Pastures were first examined for quality and the presence of noxious weeds. Practically all the seed bought could have qualified for certification. It is estimated that the saving on the purchase-price of this seed was equal to the salaries for a year of two farm supervisors.

In regard to dairy stock it was found to be a distinct advantage to know months in advance what to buy for each district. In the North Auckland district nearly two thousand heifers were * budgeted for, at an estimated delivered cost of £8 10s. a head. Judicious buying by the supervisors, assisted by the financial depression, resulted in an average saving of £2 a head, or nearly £4,000, which enabled the Minister, with a subsidy from the Unemployment Board, to provide development contracts for over four hundred unemployed Maoris in the North.

Wages and Labour Costs.

If there is a feature of this statement worthy of emphasis it is that which relates to the stress, which has compelled the Maori communities to look to farming for their maintenance. They have been called upon to respond to the lead which Parliament gave in the legislation of 1928 to 1930, and to place their resources at the disposal of the development policy. Chief amongst these are the tribal lands and the tribal man-power. The lands are practically unencumbered, of good quality, and are suitable for subdivision into small holdings. With the guarantee of eventual legal occupation of individualized holdings and of reasonable financial assistance the man-power was confidently expected to respond to the appeal that in the development stage it should exert itself at a bare sustenance rate. This was demanded in the circumstances in order that a sufficient margin between the cost of development and the value of the developed land might be created to cover the deficiencies that it was anticipated would arise in the critical stage of the Native-land settlement scheme—namely, the farming stage.

The response of the man-power has been magnificent. In the North Auckland district, although over 400 units have been assisted and the expenditure to the end of August last has reached £31,446, no wages have been paid to any Maori settler for work in connection with his holding. On the group of schemes in the neighbourhood of Waiuku, Tuakau, and Onewhero, controlled by Te Puea Herangi, arrangements were made by that remarkable lady to secure the maximum results at a minimum cost. The following extract from a report on the Waipipi scheme may be quoted:—

“The Waipipi scheme comprises 282 acres of land. Te Puea Herangi, a chieftainess of the Waikato tribe and first cousin to Te Rata Mahuta, was invited by the owners of the Waipipi sections to undertake the development and farming of the same. Though not an owner herself, the invitation from a section of the tribe which acknowledged the paramountcy of the Potatau family to come and occupy and cultivate the land would not have been accounted unusual in pre-pakeha days. Te Puea transplanted to Waiuku a community of young men and women, numbering over thirty, to carry out the development work. It was decided to break the land to grass with a caterpillar tractor and tractor implements. Six young men were selected to represent the community on the pay-roll; a wage rate of 6s. a working-day was fixed for each of the six, and this had to suffice for the purchase of food for the community. Fortunately, fish abounded in the streams and the sea close by. The plough brought to the surface a quantity of gum, which the young women gathered and cleaned. The development work commenced on the 20th September, 1929, with scrub-cutting, the filling-in of gum-holes, and the erection of a cottage. Ploughing began on the 16th October, and in thirty-five working-days an area equal to 282 acres was completed, including the necessary ploughing of 135 chains of road frontage. The average area ploughed per day was a little over 8 acres, at a wage cost of 6s. a day. The total sustenance wages earned were £96; the gum produced £104! It was an illustration of the working-bee or *ohu* operating under an energetic hereditary chieftainess, who spared neither herself nor her people in the new sphere of productive effort.”

For our purpose this system may be referred to as the Waiuku system, the chief characteristics of which are the selection of a member or members of a family or group to represent it on the official pay-roll and the application of the sustenance wage to the food account of the group while engaged on the development of its land. The system has been applied to the Onewhero, Kaihau, and Ruatoki (C) schemes. In the case of Ruatoki the sustenance rate is 5s. a working-day.

The North Auckland system obtains to some extent at Ruatoki, Ruatahuna, Whakatohea, and Mohaka, the Maori settlers giving their labour free of cost to the development fund, which assists them by providing implements, materials, seed, manure, and stock.