

Maori Land District may be properly understood. European supervision has been available from the beginning to secure the pursuit of a proper plan of development or the selection of suitable material and stock, but the inspiration of the community to quick, inexpensive, yet efficient work has been provided by their energetic and autocratic chieftainness.

By the beginning of February, 1930, work had advanced on Waipipi (Te Hakona) sufficiently to enable that area to be grassed and ring-fenced, and for a section of the working-bee to be detached to commence operations on the Kaihau (Tahuna) scheme. Although this land was of better quality and aspect than that at Te Hakona, it was badly infested with blackberry and gorse. Since the death of Henare Kaihau it had been sadly neglected, and a large sum had accrued for rates to the Franklin County Council. Kaihau's family could not handle the property, and it was decided to hand it over to Te Puea and her people.

By this time other sections of the Waikato Tribe living near Tuakau, at the Waikato Heads and Opuatia, were clamouring to have their lands brought under the new system of land-development. The Native Land Amendment, &c., Act, 1929, had passed Parliament, and for the first time in the history of the Dominion extended to the development and farming of Native-owned lands assistance from State loan funds. On the advice of Te Puea the provisions of the new Act were applied to lands at Onewhero and Opuatia, which were grouped together under the title of the Onewhero Development Scheme. While the administration was delegated to the Maori Land Board of the district, the finance was provided from the Native Land Settlement Account. The Onewhero scheme has been extended from time to time, and at the end of last financial year embraced lands at Koheroa and Waikarakia, on the eastern side of the Waikato River, as well as at Onewhero and Opuatia. To all these the Waiuku system was applied, and the organization and direction were placed under Te Puea. The owners of the lands thus brought under the development schemes insisted on this system of control, and the Department saw no reason, after the experience at Waiuku, why their wishes should not be met.

Representations had also been made by members of Te Rata's family at Waahi (Huntly) that their lands should be developed under the new scheme, and an area of 358 acres situated near Rakau-manga was gazetted towards the end of the 1930 financial year. One of these was owned by Te Rata himself and his brothers, and by agreement among them was placed in the occupation of Tonga Mahuta. During the financial year 1931-32 the Waahi scheme was enlarged by the purchase of a small section from a European, and by the addition of another section at Rotowaro owned by the Mahuta family, which was in the occupation of Tumate Mahuta, another of Te Rata's brothers. The "Maori King" thus placed himself and members of his family at the head of the development movement in the Waikato district, and by this action, as well as by personal advice to leaders of the various subtribes, signified his approval of the new measure and his desire for the hearty practical support of his people.

Confiscation and sales to Europeans have reduced the land holdings of the Waikato Tribe to small scattered areas. In many cases the only lands are reserves set aside by the Crown, the ownership of which is so congested as to make it impracticable to subdivide or individualize. The policy of consolidation described in the part of this statement relating to the North Auckland lands was not applicable to the middle and northern Waikato lands; but it was thought that similar ends might be reached so far as development and occupation were concerned by arrangement among the owners, which could be given effect to under authority of the development legislation. A large section of the tribe was practically landless.

The Waikato tribesman is a hard worker, of great physical strength and endurance, who has been forced through at least the last three generations to endure hardships and great privations. He has been engaged in draining, stumping, grubbing, and clearing land for the European farmer, or making roads for local bodies or the Government, or erecting fences, building houses, planting, weeding, or digging potatoes, or assisting in harvesting or other seasonal farming operations. As Te Rata put it when discussing the possibilities of his fellow tribesmen becoming settlers and farmers, "Waikatos have been farming all their lives, but not for themselves. They have now the opportunity on what land remain to them of farming for themselves."

The standard of living among the Waikato may be low, but it has been enforced by circumstances. The aims of the people are high, and in their past history they have shown great constructive capacity. In their buildings and the lay-out of their villages, wherever their resources have permitted them, they have endeavoured to make both constructions spacious enough for the periodical tribal gatherings. The cookhouses are the largest in Maoridom, while the great halls and dining-rooms at Ngaruawahia are striking evidence of the large-scale conceptions of the Waikato leaders. This factor should be borne in mind by any one who questions the capacity of these leaders to visualize the scope of land-settlement as applied to the tribal conditions. They have confidence in the ability of their people to perform every operation relating to the breaking-in of land; they are assured of the loyal support and co-operation of all units; they have been compelled to make use of every resource that did not involve the one thing beyond their reach, money; and the people have ceased to question the publicly expressed word of their paramount chief and hereditary leader.

Development costs are higher on the Waikato schemes than on those of the North Auckland district for several reasons. The Nga-Puhi brought under the northern schemes lands partially improved, built on, and stocked. In regard to the lands at Waiuku, Te Puea and her community have had to break in unimproved land, to grass, fence, build, and stock. Costs should be compared rather with those of the district in which she operates, and on that basis the results achieved are very satisfactory. A higher standard of building is required in an environment surrounded by high-class European farms. The Waipipi and Kaihau farms have been very closely subdivided, the former into five farms of an average area of 56 acres. This has meant heavy cost for building, fencing, plant, and equipment.