

reckoning came for the Maori communities of the Bay of Plenty. They were thrown back on their depleted resources. Wherever dairying had become established among them, as at Te Kaha, Torere, Opotiki, Ruatoki, and on scattered holdings in the Whakatane district that industry became a rallying point on the eve of the present financial crisis. During the years 1928, 1929, and 1930 the strongest and most insistent demands for assistance in the readjustment of their titles and the development of their lands came from these communities, greatly accentuated by the distressful circumstances of former employees on public works and of those hitherto dependent on rents.

The special features of the territory occupied by the Arawa and Ngati-Tuwharetoa, comprising the pumice lands of Rotorua and Taupo, will be better dealt with in the section dealing with the development of pumice lands. These tribes possessed the largest area of undeveloped lands in the North Island, but also the most difficult from many standpoints. In farm experience they were probably the most backward of the Maori tribes. The Arawa were to some extent dependent on rents and timber royalties, while it is notorious that the Taupo Natives derived material support from timber royalties and from employment in the timber-mills of Mokai and of the forests along the Main Trunk Line. Public works and afforestation also absorbed a considerable number of the youth of the two tribes. With the cessation of the activities of the Government and of local bodies and the depression in the timber industry the lot of Arawa and Ngati-Tuwharetoa became as distressing as that of other tribes in the Waiariki district.

The Problem of the Pumice Lands.

This problem is popularly associated with the lands round about Taupo and Rotorua. The researches of several State Departments and farm experience over a wide range of country have, however, shown that the pumice problem is much more extensive, and relates to at least two-thirds of the lands of the North Island. It is part of the greater problem of volcanic soils, which account for the surface of the North Island, except southern Wanganui, Manawatu, Wairarapa, half of Hawke's Bay, and outcrops of limestone and papa lands throughout Wairoa, Poverty Bay, and the East Coast. For development and farming purposes it is difficult to realize that at such distant points as Waimiha, Horohoro, Kaitimako, Mohaka, Ruatahuna, Ohope, Torere, and Cape Runaway one is dealing with pumice soils distributed from practically one centre. Fewer mistakes would be made in planning development with private or State resources if the dominance of the pumice cover over such a wide extent of territory was appreciated. It is a cover that compels intensive methods of soil-preparation, cultivation of the surface and fertilizing from the very beginning; also close subdivision and delimitation of farm areas conforming to the factor of economic periodical top-dressing or cultivation and cropping.

In the Rotorua district there was ample land on the north, west, and south-west shores of Lake Rotoiti, and to the south and south-west of the Township of Rotorua. The pumice stretched away in all directions from Rotorua; to Te Whaiti and Ruatahuna in a south-easterly direction; to Taupo and Tokaanu in a southerly direction; to Atiamuri in a south-westerly direction; and to Tauranga, Maketu, and Te Teko in northerly bearings of the compass. Before the Reform Government went out of office at the end of 1928 it had projected the settlement of portions of this extensive territory, and had commenced the construction of the railway from Rotorua to Taupo. A consolidation scheme had been launched to define and readjust the location of interests purchased by the Crown in Native lands; and the scheme aimed to prepare areas for development by the Crown, including lands near the Hautu Prison Farm, at the south end of Lake Taupo. The activities of the State Forest Service and of several afforestation companies on the Kaingaroa Plains and in the Taupo and Putaruru districts; the construction of the Rotorua-Taupo Railway and Highway; the clamour throughout the Dominion for land-settlement; and the high prices then prevailing for all primary products; all these combined to attract extraordinary attention to the pumice belt and its possibilities. Ministers of the United Cabinet, which succeeded the Reform Government, inspected the whole area and acquainted themselves with its possibilities for development and settlement.

Eventually the choice of the Lands Department fell upon the Rangitaiki Valley, where the Galatea Estate is situated, upon the low-lying lands near Te Teko, now comprised in the Onepu Development Scheme, and on the lands in the Whirinaki Valley, adjoining the Guthrie Settlement, on the Rotorua-Atiamuri Road, now comprised in the Ngakuru Development Scheme.

Native Development Schemes on Pumice Lands.

The reasons which prompted the establishment of Native-land-development schemes on the pumice lands of the Rotorua and adjoining districts may now be set forth. I have always been an earnest advocate of the development of lands in the pumice belt. Observation over a number of years in the neighbourhood of Rotorua had convinced me that, with proper cultivation and manuring, the lands there were capable of growing the best pastures and crops. There was a larger area of undeveloped land in the hands of the Maori communities there than anywhere else. For the relief of unemployment through land-development there was greater scope on such lands than on Native-owned lands in any other part of the Dominion, and the conditions were such that whether on marsh land, on dry terraces or hillsides, on scrub, tussock, or bush-land, development could proceed with little interruption throughout the year. In regard to fencing timber this district enjoys with the Rangitaiki basin and Taupo the advantage of extensive untapped resources in totara and matai forests where posts and battens are cheap to produce and easily accessible by motor transport. The water-supply is better than in any part of the reputed fertile districts of the east coast of the North Island.

There remains for serious consideration the problem of soil-deficiency. When members of the United Cabinet made visits of inspection to the pumice belt between Tokaanu and Rotorua the present Prime Minister, then Minister of Agriculture, was good enough to allow me the services of Mr. B. C. Aston. Mr. Aston had for years been engaged on the problem of mineral deficiencies in soils, more