

Most of the work was done by contract, subsidized from unemployment funds to the extent of £393, but this amount did not come to credit of the scheme until the current financial year. The value of tools, equipment, and material on hand at the end of March, 1932, was £148, and reclamations were due from other schemes for battens supplied from the Parekarangi bush. After allowing for these items, the cost of development completed to the 31st March, 1932, was £3,979, of which one-third was for fencing. Most of the fencing, however, anticipated the cultivation and pasturing programme of the following year.

(c) PEKA.

This scheme completes the series of schemes that have been put in operation along the Rotorua-Atiamuri Road from Horohoro to the junction of that road with the Rotorua-Taupo Main Highway, just south of the Hemo Gorge. It brings under development the lands of another subdivision of the Tuhourangi Sub-tribe of Whakarewarewa Village. The decision to extend development to these lands was arrived at after many months of consideration and deliberation.

*Congested State of Whakarewarewa Village.*

One factor may be mentioned here as influencing the decision in regard to blocks owned by the Whakarewarewa Natives on the Atiamuri Road, wherever the land is suitable for cultivation and is reasonably well watered. That factor is the congestion of the Maori population in the Whakarewarewa Village, which had been the subject of a report by a special Commission in 1926 (see G.-7, 1926). The Commission consisted of the present Under-Secretary for Public Works, Mr. C. J. McKenzie, Mr. R. G. Hammond, Town-planner, Mr. Mair, the Government Architect, Dr. Peter H. Buck (Te Rangihiroa), and Mr. H. T. Mitchell. The Commission quoted instances of overcrowding, and stated that many of the buildings were unsuitable and in a dilapidated condition. It was estimated at the time that forty-five buildings should be demolished. The Commission recommended as one of the remedial measures the erection of a model village above the present Whakarewarewa Village to which part of the population might be persuaded to move. Up to 1931 nothing had been done beyond the construction of a road to the proposed site. In the meantime the congestion had increased, and there had been outbreaks of typhoid and many deaths from tuberculosis. It was becoming a more urgent and insistent problem to provide homes elsewhere for some of the Whakarewarewa families. The attractions of the village life and of the thermal springs, and of casual employment on afforestation projects had satisfied the wants of the population until the present depression became acute. The opportunity afforded by the development schemes, which had been undertaken on lands in which they had interests and which were so close to their village, and the growing difficulty of securing employment, influenced their elders to apply for an extension of the Horohoro scheme, which they had kept under keen if sceptical observation. Early in 1931 Mita Taupopoki, the well-known elder of Whakarewarewa, asked that his lands, the Peka and Waitaruna Blocks, should be brought under the development scheme. Formal steps were taken on the 6th June, 1931, when an area of 1,148 acres was gazetted under section 23 of the 1929 Act.

The scheme was extended during the following summer by the purchase of two freehold sections owned by Mr. J. P. Lawrie, of a net area of a little over 90 acres, which were so situated as to make the development of the best part of the Peka Block difficult and expensive, necessitating the maximum amount of boundary-fencing to exclude the small area. The purchase was strongly recommended in order to remove two awkward salients. At the same time Mita Taupopoki made a gift of eight acres at the junction of the Taupo and Atiamuri Roads as a site for a dairy factory.

It was also decided to acquire from one Williamson the lease of an area containing 120 acres on the north side of the Atiamuri Road, opposite the Peka Block, and to add it to the Peka scheme. This completed the connection of the Peka with the Parekarangi scheme on the one side, and with the Tihiotonga Block, which was farmed by the Waiariki Board, on the other side.

The following comment on the unique position occupied by the enlarged Peka scheme may be quoted:—

“The purchase of Lawrie’s and Williamson’s, the near prospect of the commencement of dairying on Horohoro and Ngakuru, taken in conjunction with its position at the junction of two main roads, which debouch through the Hemo Gorge, a veritable gut, to the most important inland centre of the district, all combine to make Peka a scheme of first-rate importance. Mita Taupopoki’s gift enhances its value as a possible collecting and manufacturing point for the produce of the lands, which the Crown is developing.”

The expenditure to the 31st March, 1932, was £2,291, exclusive of the cost of the purchases mentioned, which amounted to £649. The Farm Supervisor reported that the following development work had been completed up to that date:—

Three hundred acres cleared, burnt, and stumped ready for ploughing, of which 100 acres were ploughed, worked, and sown in oats and temporary grasses; 400 chains new fencing; 95 acres draining; and 120 chains access roading. All work had been done in a thorough manner. Drainage, fencing, roading, and scrub-cutting were subsidized from unemployment funds, but the subsidy was not available within the financial year. The expenditure included equipment (implements, tools, truck, &c.) costing £287.

(d) WAIPAPA BUSH.

Reference has been made to the purchase of totara posts for the Horohoro scheme at £9 per hundred, a price which was considered excessive, having regard to the plentiful supply of this class of timber in forests within easy reach of Rotorua. The supply and price were dependent on the lorry merchants, who had secured control of Maori supplies at Oruanui and Te Whaiti. It appeared necessary, in view of the scale of development in the Rotorua district, to secure control from the forests to the fencing-lines in order to reduce to a minimum the delivered cost to all schemes within economic range.