

employed in fencing £680. Sheep and bullocks were purchased through the Bulk Store Purchase Account from the drought-stricken areas of Poverty Bay and the East Coast, and after being grazed on the property for a period long enough to crush the fern were forwarded to the schemes in the Rotorua district.

The eastern portion of Eiver's Block contained much marshy land, which was drained at a cost of £604.

The cost of development on the Ngatiawa scheme to the end of March, 1932, was £8,417, as detailed in the schedules to this statement, or an average over the portion of the land developed of £4 10s. an acre. The expenditure included the following items: Equipment, £318; buildings and accommodation, £244; purchase of stock, £473; surveys, £111. The labour-cost of development was entitled to an unemployment subsidy estimated at £700, which had not come to credit of the scheme at the 31st March, 1932. Taking these items into account, the actual cost of development chargeable against the land at that date did not exceed £3 10s. an acre.

In any discussion of this scheme—and there has been much adverse criticism passed on it by the people of the locality—it should be borne in mind that the factor of relieving unemployment among the Maoris of the district greatly influenced the administration and plan of development. One hundred and three Maoris found employment on the scheme off and on from the end of May, 1931, to the end of April of the following year. The fact that unemployment funds were available to reduce the cost of development to the land was an incentive to undertake development on a large scale. The chain system of handling sheep and cattle from the East Coast farms by way of Whakatane or Ruatoki to the newly established pastures of the Rotorua district enabled the Department to master the problem of crushing fern and consolidating the light soil on the Ohope Block and on Section C of the Ruatoki scheme. Time will show whether the methods adopted on the Ngatiawa scheme will be successful, and whether the settlement of the class of land bordering on the Ohiwa Harbour is justified.

(m) RUATOKI.

The scheme, which has been established on the Ruatoki Blocks, situated immediately south of the Opouriao Settlement, and the Ruatahuna scheme, which will be dealt with under the next subheading, cater for the greater part of the Tuhoe or Urewera Tribe.

The Tuhoe or Urewera Tribe was the last in the Dominion to submit their lands to the jurisdiction of a legally constituted tribunal. The investigation of titles which was begun in the year 1897 was not completed until 1908. In 1910 the Crown decided to acquire land in the Urewera country, and the pursuit of this policy deflected any tendency there may have been among many of the Tuhoe folk to engage in farming. The Ruatoki Blocks fortunately were excluded from the operations of the Land Purchase Officers, so that when it became necessary in 1921 to consolidate the interests purchased by the Crown in the Urewera Blocks and the interests retained by the Native owners the adjustments did not affect the Ruatoki Blocks.

Although the Urewera country remained virgin to land-title tribunals until the end of the nineteenth century, so that a halo of mystery surrounded the territory and misconceptions arose as to the primitive conditions under which its romantic inhabitants lived, the Tuhoe people have had the same opportunities of establishing contact with the culture of the pakeha as those of the King-country or of Taupo, and even of the neighbouring Whakatane, Opotiki, and Poverty Bay districts. It is true that schools and roads were not introduced until the end of the nineteenth century, but the youth of the tribe was in constant touch with affairs in the surrounding districts, found employment at shearing, bushfelling, and other development work and on public works to the same degree as the Maoris of neighbouring tribes. It was not surprising, therefore, to find the Maoris of Ruatoki following the example of these tribes or of the European settlers of the Opouriao and Taneatua settlements, and turning serious attention to the cultivation of the fertile lands on both sides of the Whakatane River, which were comprised in the Ruatoki Blocks. In 1910 legislation was passed which enabled the Opouriao Dairy Co. to establish a cheese-factory at Ruatoki. The Ruatoki Natives had previously engaged in dairying, but the establishment of the factory in their midst stimulated further progress, so that twenty years later they had approximately 2,000 acres of their land in pasture of sorts and in crops, and were providing one-third of the milk-supply of the cheese-factory.

It was evident, however, that the nature of the land titles, the inadequacy of financial assistance, the lack of organization and supervision, and the comparative inexperience of the people militated against the attainment of a high standard in farming or the possession of herds of good quality. In regard to land titles the Native Land Court had determined owners in the usual way and had partitioned the blocks into family and sub-tribal holdings. But, as often happened in such matters, the determinations of the Court were governed by Native custom, which allocated specific areas to long-departed ancestors, and compelled their living descendants to accept mathematically calculated proportionate interests at such places and in such areas as their genealogical descent might decree. It resulted that a man descended from a number of successful ancestors might find himself entitled to many valuable, but scattered and too often undefined areas of land. If in addition to the implications of ancestral right, some arrangement were made to equalize interests between high country and low, or between lands on one side of a river and those on the other side, or between what may be termed village lands and farm lands, it is easy to conceive the dilemma of the hapless individual.

As to finance, some assistance was given by the dairy company, some by European farmers, who supplied cattle the cost of which was paid out of milk cheques, but most was obtained from local store-keepers. It may be stated here that when the Department undertook the development and financing of the Ruatoki Blocks it was not called upon to assume liability for more than three accounts secured by stock mortgage. Land mortgages were not permitted by law in any part of the Urewera country.