

## RANANA DEVELOPMENT SCHEME.

This scheme was officially undertaken on the 7th April, 1930, when fifty-one subdivisions of Morikau No. 1, Ranana, and Ngarakauwhakarara Blocks were brought under section 23 of the Act of 1929. Twenty-one other subdivisions were added on the 21st March, 1931, making the total area of land affected by the scheme 4,516 acres 3 roods 14 perches. The Hiruharama and Ranana Native Villages, situated on the east bank of the Whanganui River, are on the scheme.

The lands comprised in the scheme were formerly vested in the Aotea Maori Land Board, and included reserves set aside from the Board's Morikau Farm for the use and occupation of the inhabitants of the two villages mentioned. The Board had cleared and grassed portions of the allotments, but released them to the owners or beneficiaries some years ago free of all liabilities. The Maoris had commenced dairying with the assistance of two dairy companies operating in the Whanganui district, and incurred debts for stock, dairy equipment, farm requisites, and goods supplied. In most cases the debts were secured by bills of sale.

The story of dairying at Ranana before it was reorganized and assisted under the scheme is a repetition of the story of similar enterprises at Ruatoki, Opape, Torere, and parts of North Auckland, indifferent pastures overstocked with cull cows of low-producing capacity bought at high prices, insufficient equipment and finance, and lack of experience and supervision. The problems varied only with the character and attainments of the Maori population concerned and the quality and suitability of their lands. In one respect the Ranana lands were at a disadvantage compared with those at Ruatoki, Opape, and Torere. The latter were close to dairy-factories and townships, and were served by good roads, whereas the only means of communication with the Ranana lands was by river-boat. It is reported, however, that this handicap is about to be removed by the completion of a metalled road from Whanganui to Pipiriki.

The Ranana lands are of good quality and for the most part consist of easy hills over which horse-drawn implements can work. The lands have been so partitioned as to necessitate considerable internal roading for their efficient settlement.

At the commencement of the scheme many of the allotments were badly infested with blackberry and gorse, and ragwort had invaded the northern, or Hiruharama, end of the scheme to such an extent as to seriously affect dairying. The position was similar to that at Mohaka and could be met only by encouraging the Maori settlers to clear, grub, and cultivate, with assistance from unemployment funds, when these were available, and with the assurance that seed, manure, fencing-material, and stock would be supplied by the scheme to make their labour effective.

A Farm Supervisor, Mr. Guthrie, was appointed on the recommendation of a committee of the Ranana and Hiruharama Natives, and arrangements were made to build a suitable house for him at Ranana. An advisory committee, headed by Mr. Hoeroa Marumaru, who was also the chairman of the committee of the Morikau Farm, was nominated by the Native owners to co-operate with the Supervisor and the Aotea Maori Land Board, to which the management of the scheme had been delegated. Mr. Guthrie's appointment was terminated in April, 1931. A local foreman, Tanginoa Tapa, was appointed to superintend the development work, together with an assistant, N. Takarangi, who had charge of the issue of stores, the keeping of wage-sheets, and generally of the clerical work. Mr. Hoeroa Marumaru was appointed Supervisor by the Maori Land Board, with control of the Ranana scheme. The President of the Board has expressed satisfaction with the arrangement and confidence in the local organization of the scheme.

The expenditure to the end of March, 1931, was £5,864, of which £1,555 was paid to discharge the liabilities already mentioned of the Maori settlers and £1,069 for the purchase of dairy stock. Fencing-material and fertilizers cost nearly £700, and farm implements and draught horses £284. The sum of £1,199 was paid in wages, the Supervisor having fixed a rate of 7s. a day. All work was paid by the day. Sundry items included seed, building-material, chaff, loose tools, and freights. The system then adopted made it impracticable to apportion the wages paid to the particular activities in respect of which they were incurred. The scheme was at this time badly controlled, and there was not the close connection between the field organization and the office at Whanganui. The policy in regard to this scheme was the same as laid down in regard to all others; that individual settlers should be encouraged to develop their holdings by their own efforts as far as possible.

By the end of March, 1932, the expenditure had reached £10,060, reduced to £8,621 by deductions from cream cheques (£1,439). The dairy herds were culled at the end of the milking-season and the culls sold at auction. The disposal of these relieved the various farms and enabled the settlers concerned to take their quota of heifers purchased in the previous season for replacements. The improvement in the pastures due to top-dressing with a 2-cwt.-per-acre application of superphosphate and the introduction of heifers of better quality was reflected in the increased production of butterfat. In the two seasons since the scheme was launched 176 cows and heifers and nineteen bulls were purchased at a cost of £1,683.

Improvements on twenty-seven sections consisted of fencing, which absorbed in material alone £1,007; top-dressing and grassing and growing crops for winter feed, manure, and seeds costing £440; the provision of cow sheds and yards and in some cases of milking-plants, the latter costing £165. The sum of £504 was spent in the purchase of farm implements and horses. The payments in respect of the cottage for the Supervisor and of a store-shed and cow-sheds amounted to £838. Sheep were purchased at a cost of £130 to control the spread of ragwort. The wages bill since the inception of the scheme reached £2,625, but so far has not been dissected to show its apportionment to the appropriate class of work performed. The item for discharge of liabilities was not increased beyond the amount paid in the previous year.

Good progress was made in the construction of access roads. Some metalling was done, the gravel for which and for concreting the floors of the cow sheds and yards was obtained from the bed of the Whanganui River, screened on the river-bed and landed on a bank above high-water mark. The gravel was then moved by horse drays to a dump, and sledges finished delivery.