

WAIKATO—MANIAPOTO MAORI LAND DISTRICT.

Lands under development in the Waikato country can conveniently be divided into three districts, comprising:—

- (1) The Waikato proper area—from the Tamaki Isthmus to the Puniu River near Kihikihi.
- (2) The Maniapoto area—being the lands of the tribe similarly named domiciled, and now generally known as the “King-country.”
- (3) The Hauraki district, which encompasses the Coromandel Peninsula and the fertile Hauraki Plains.

The Waikato area, which is supervised from Hamilton, has always had the whole-hearted support and co-operation of that leader of her people—Princess te Pua Herangi. In addition, the members of the family of the Maori “king” are also at the head of development movements in the Waikato. Confiscation and sales of Native land in the Waikato have reduced the individual holdings to small scattered areas, and to-day a large number of Natives throughout this district are practically landless. This has had the effect of throwing them more or less on their own resources, and it is to their credit that they have been able to adapt themselves to the changing needs and conditions and have been able to wrest a living in competition with their pakeha brothers. Nevertheless, what material has been available has been put to good use, and the average Waikato Maori as a farmer will, with careful handling and sympathetic supervision, compare favourably with the pakeha farmer.

In the Maniapoto area, which is supervised from Te Kuiti, much development work has been carried out during the last eight years, of which a long and interesting tale could be told. In 1932, when the development of Native lands had just been introduced amongst the Maniapoto people, the country between Otorohanga and Kawhia and between Te Kuiti and Taumarunui contained large areas of Native land capable of successful development. At long conferences with the Maori people who owned these lands, very wide differences of opinion were then expressed. In fact, at that time there was scepticism bordering on hostility towards any comprehensive scheme of land development. As a contrast to this attitude, Native land development schemes and all subsidiary activities connected therewith, are to-day of great interest at all meetings of the Maori people. The suspicions of those early days are now reported to be rapidly evaporating, and an increasingly large number of Natives are desirous of benefiting under these schemes.

The last three years have been marked as ones during which the people of this district in increasingly large numbers decided, on their own initiative, to follow the example of those who, during the years from 1930 onwards, had to be persuaded to allow their idle lands to be brought under active development. From experience gained through the last few years it has been possible to make a selection of what land would be accepted as suitable for successful settlement.

In the Hauraki area, development commenced by the inclusion of 376 acres near Kennedy's Bay. Since that time further representations have been made to bring areas in the Coromandel district, and also fertile lands on the Hauraki Plains and Thames Valley, into the schemes.

Prospects for future settlement are good, and indications point to the fact that Natives in this district are quite alive to the advantages to be gained by participating in the State's development schemes. The areas owned by the Natives in the Hauraki district are scattered, but the holdings are considered to be of such a size and the land of such a quality that land development in this district has a bright future. The Natives in the district are of a good type, sober in their habits, and determined to make every effort to prove their worth.

The weather conditions generally throughout the South Auckland district have, during the year, been recorded as a fairly mild winter, a dry summer, and a dry autumn. There was a high humidity, which encouraged the growth of fungus and insect pests: that is rare, except in a wet season.

In all areas the stock generally is in good condition. The types taken throughout the district are fairly good. Butterfat production in certain areas is low per cow, but as conditions are bettered and proper instruction is given this will improve. Owing to the long dry spell experienced in the province dairy production fell off much more rapidly than usual. The stock market was also adversely affected. Graziers hesitated to purchase store cattle with no guarantee of rain to stimulate pastures.

It is hoped and expected that the building of good homes for Natives, giving place to those hovels pervious to the elements, will be the forerunner of improved health conditions, a greater resistance to disease, and a decrease in infant mortality. Owing to the shortage of skilled labour, the erection of cottages was somewhat retarded until the latter part of the year. It has been considered advisable to hand the erection of all dwellings over to the Public Works Department, which is able to give this Department the benefit of its expert supervision. This is very necessary.

At 31st March, 1938, there were 135 assisted settlers. New farms numbering fifty-three were brought under active development during the year, while five comprehensive schemes were commenced.

Grants from the Employment Promotion Fund were utilized mainly for subsidizing labour-costs on land development schemes, and, in addition, assistance was given on Native properties not under the control of the Department. Excluding settlers, the total number of men employed was 272. Settlers assisted from the Employment Promotion Fund numbered sixty-five. The total number of dependants for all classes of workers numbered 1,760.