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Through New Zealand (XX)

BREAD AND SWEAT

By "SUNDOWNER"

THERE must be Maoris who abuse social security — men, and women, too, who loaf and sponge and lie at the expense of the rest of the community. I am sure that the number of such

SOCIAL SECURITY

people, if not the proportion, is high, but whether it runs to hundreds or to thousands I am not going to guess. I suspect, however, that is about one Maori for 10 Pakehas, and if it proved to be one in five I would not be horrified. I would think that steps ought to be taken to reduce the number, and when I saw successful efforts being taken to reduce the number of Pakeha spongers I would begin to think that there was a chance of doing something effective among the Maoris, too.

But I could not help wondering as I wandered up the Coast where those Maori humbugs were. They were not on the highways, and they were not in any by-ways that were wide enough to tempt an under-grade driver of an over-width truck. I suppose there were some among the groups I often saw outside hotels and country stores, and some among the drinkers inside, but those groups were no bigger and no more numerous than I have always found in comparable situations among Pakehas. They were certainly not numerous enough to make any reasonable traveller wonder if Maoris ever worked.

A disinterested traveller visiting the East Coast for the first time would be much more likely to suppose that no one else works. He would be wrong, of course, but not so far astray as the man who is told, and without further inquiry believes, that three Maoris in four live on social security. The great majority of the Maoris live as their Pakeha neighbours live—by the sweat of their brow. You don't see them sitting on their doorsteps (as you were probably told you would), or basking in the sun, or lying in the shade. You see them working on the roads—stripped to the waist and sweating; driving sheep or cattle to other districts (without Pakeha assistance or supervision); working their own land (under the same pressures, social and economic, as keep Pakehas busy); cutting scrub (more often as contractors than as hired labour); driving trucks (often their own); and a surprising number milking cows. I was astonished to find so many Maori dairy-farmers in country in which Maoris have long since taken to sheep.

In North Auckland it had surprised me that Maoris seemed to have no sheep at all, and no inclination for them. On the East Coast, however, they have all grown up with sheep, become musterers, shearers, crutchers, and drovers, and yet scores of them have turned over to cows. I heard several explanations—from the monthly cheques cows bring in to the reluctance of the Native Department to trust Maoris with sheep in case they eat them; and I suppose there is some truth in all these. But my point is that loafing and dairy-farming don't go together.



"You see them working on the roads, stripped to the waist, and sweating"

It was not so easy to answer the police constable—a life-long friend of the Maoris—who asked me to sit in his office and count the number of Maori children returning from the shop with ice-creams. That is where the family

GETTING AND SPENDING

allowance goes, he told me, and added that it was "a damned shame."

"But it doesn't all go that way."

"Yes, in many cases it does. I've watched individual families. Some mothers let their children spend every penny of the allowance."

"Well if the children are eating it the men are not drinking it."

"That's not the point. It's being wasted. It was not provided for that purpose."

"I agree. But the usual story is that it all goes to the hotels, and what I'm trying to say is that it clearly doesn't."

"No, it doesn't. The Maoris drink too much, but they don't drink all day. Most of the drinking is between five and six, and it is all pretty harmless now that they don't get the hard stuff."

"In any case they can't drink without money."

(continued on next page)



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