

The lease to the Crown for afforestation is for 70 years and there is provision in the lease agreement for both Trusts to purchase back the entire forests from the Crown, if they so wish after 40 years with a part of their annual revenue being used in payment.

Second in charge for the Forest Service of the Rotoaira Forest is a Tuwharetoa owner, Alec Gage. From his office at Turangi he administers a very commercial destiny over his land. He says the return to the Trust Board for the Rotoaira Forest will be 15 cents in the dollar with the first commercial returns from thinnings coming up next year.

Good Return

Alec has been with the Forest Service since leaving school and says he's proud to play such a part in seeing Maori owners get a good return on their land.

On the day I went to find out more about the afforestation development, Alec took me and Maori Affairs Department community officer, John Mariu on a tour of the Rotoaira Forest.

We travelled down roads constructed for the Tongariro power project, that are now seeing a transformation in land use. The bush and scrub has been cleared and pine seedlings planted progressively to give an even

spread to eventual thinning and clear-felling. In many areas, as we bumped over dusty access roads, the distinctive yellow broom was starting to make a successful comeback and Alec said those areas would need to be sprayed again.

In other areas, a fungicide had hit the underside of young pines making it necessary for more spraying.

Care taken

A very noticeable aspect was the care taken to preserve the natural environment with the native bush being left around streams or water-courses feeding into the lake.

After circling the lake we finally came upon one of the Forest Service quality control teams operating in the forest. In charge was John Hura, another Tuwharetoa owner. He pointed out how his team checked that the contract gang had done their job properly in pruning branches to a specified height.

He said with proper quality control the yield of millable timber per hectare may exceed that of the nearby Lake Taupo Forest, with a return of around 20-thousand dollars per hectare.

Linked future

The future of both forests and Tu-

rangi and the surrounding district is closely intertwined because although a good return is assured for the immediate future there's a lack of young skilled forestry workers amongst the tribe. It's this predicament that has prompted some to ask if a special training programme is needed.

Also decisions have to be made about the land if the lease purchase agreement is taken up after 40 years.

Many members of the Tuwharetoa tribe are employed on the Tongariro power development but with the completion of the development many of these tribal folk and owners could face unemployment. The Board and the Trusts find this unacceptable and so their decisions for the best utilisation of the land are all the more important.

And even then there's more wheeling and dealing to be had with the Trust looking to expand on more surrounding Maori land. At present there's overtures from the Crown for Maori land to be taken into National Park and the Trust is looking to exchange land on the Desert Road side of the mountain for some of the crown land adjoining the Rotoaira Forest.

Whichever way it goes you can be sure the Tuwharetoa people will get the best deal that's to be had based on their heritage of good business sense.

**Go well
Go Shell**



**and remember...
Go easy on energy**