



LAND RETURNED

Maori Affairs Minister Ben Couch dropped in by helicopter at Waihi Marae, ancestral home of Ngati Tuwharetoa recently like a modern day Father Xmas and to carry on the analogy he distributed gifts in the form of returned, developed land, to the value of six million dollars plus. The next day he travelled on to Te Awamutu where he handed over another lot of land and assets worth more than five million dollars.

Before arriving at Waihi the minister flew over Ngati Tuwharetoa existing land blocks and forest lands in the Roto-Aira area. He was accompanied by the paramount chief Sir Hepi Te Heu Heu and Mr Tumu Te Heu Heu.

At the marae about 250 members of the tribe were waiting and extended a mihi to the visitors who included Mr G Fouhy from the Wanganui Maori Affairs Office and the minister's private secretary, Mr J Taitiko. Mr Couch said the blocks being returned were the latest achievement in a continuing programme in land development. The Dept's money and skills were used to provide a viable basis on which the owner may build.

The blocks handed back to Tuwharetoa were: Whareroa Development Scheme, situated on SH32, 8km north of Kuratau.

Development started in 1959 and in 1961 control transferred from Maori Affairs to the Lands and Survey Dept.

Total area is 1884ha of which 1509ha is in grass. It carries 9900 breeding ewes and 446 breeding cows. The valuation at June 30, 1981 was: Land and improvements \$1,885,000, stock and other assets \$431,838, total \$2,316,838. The land is Maori owned and the owners have formed a corporation with a committee of management comprising seven persons.

The second block is Oraukura Development Scheme, situated on a logging road at Moerangi on SH41, 32km west of Tokaanu. It was brought into development in 1966 with the owners contributing land worth \$13,000 and cash of \$100,000 from timber royalties and \$4,550 in other assets. Total area is 1257ha with 1000ha in grass carrying 4949 breeding ewes and 310 breeding cows. Current value and improvements are:

Land \$555,000, stock and other assets \$267,000, total \$817,000.

The debt was paid off and the cash available at the handover is around \$155,000. The property is incorporated and a committee of management is chaired by Sir Hepi Te Heu Heu.

The third Tuwharetoa block is the Waihi-Pukawa scheme situated on SH41, 16km west of Turangi. The property consists entirely of raw volcanic

Paramount Chief of Ngati Tuwharetoa, Sir Hepi Te Heu Heu, at the welcome at Waihi Marae to the Minister of Maori Affairs, Mr Couch.

ash with a very low fertility. Development started in 1942. The total area is 3141ha with 2482ha in grass, carrying 13,000 breeding ewes and 860 breeding cows. Current value is:

Land and improvements \$2,425,000, stock and other assets \$862,835.

The ownership is by shares with the crown, the Maori Trustee and the Maori owners. The owners have formed a trust with five trustees, one of whom is Sir Hepi.

Moving north to the land of the Maniapoto the minister handed over the Aotearoa development scheme which is situated on Aotearoa Rd, Arohena, 40km east of Te Awamutu. It is an extensive sheep and cattle property comprising rolling plateau country. Total area is 1712ha with 1637ha in grass and carrying 11,000 breeding ewes and 500 breeding cows.

It was brought under development in 1953 with the owners contributing land worth \$19,188. Total Maori ownership numbers 273 owners. The current value is:

Land and improvements \$4,500,000, stock and other assets \$685,000, a total of \$5,185,000.

The owners have formed a trust to take over the station as from July 1, 1982 with seven trustees appointed. The owners take over a debt of \$425,000 which is secured by a first mortgage to the Dept.