

the tribe owning the valley, anxious to allow their land to be included in the land-development schemes operated by the Native Department. Not so many years before they had turned back a party of surveyors attempting to survey the Urewera country, and the confiscation of some of their richest lands as recently as the Great War because of local disturbances had made them suspicious of the pakeha. They viewed the approaches of the Government as merely a blind to deprive them of their remaining lands.

Space does not allow full explanation of the Native land titles. It is sufficient to say that they are extremely complex, with sometimes scores of owners in a small block of land. Thus a condition precedent to any planned development of the country was the consolidation of interests by the Native Land Court. Generally speaking, this was done by exchange and purchase of interests. The aim was the establishment of secure titles to economic holdings. Tedious and skilled work, it is to the credit of the Consolidation Officers and the Native Land Court that by 1930 the project was completed. It is to their credit also that they were able to allay the suspicions of the Natives and convince them that their only object was to make waste lands productive and to ensure a livelihood for the owners and their descendants as well as a lasting benefit to New Zealand.



So in 1931, with the consent of the owners, the Ruatoki Development Scheme was undertaken. Thirty-one thousand acres of good river flats and fern and bush clad hills were involved. Some of this land was ready for individual farming, but much of it required clearing, drainage, and general development before it could support families. On the more advanced areas farms of fifty to a hundred acres were established and worked by units nominated by the owners and approved by the Native Department. For these units the Department supplied stock, fencing-materials, fertilizers, seeds, cow-sheds, and, wherever possible, better housing conditions. These advances were charged against the land and a proportion of the cream cheque taken for repayment. On the undeveloped land the men and women of the community undertook the necessary work to bring the land into production, being paid from Unemployment Funds for their labour. Most important was the appointment of a competent resident supervisor to assist and instruct the Natives and act as the Department's representative. Under him was a foreman-storeman (now distinct appointments) to direct the workers and handle the issue of stores.

Such is a short history of the beginning of the scheme. In 1932 the land produced £1,700. There were about 700 head of live-stock in the area. In 1942 receipts were over £42,000, and the herds produced half a million pounds of butterfat. The "Milk Cart Derby" in 1930 was a very small affair. To-day it has more starters than the Duoro Cup.

Fourteen years have seen many changes in Ruatoki. The fences whose battens leant towards one another in comradely fashion have been replaced by strong straight fences made from concrete posts cast on the scheme or from posts and battens taken out of stands of timber on the hills. Ramshackle cow-sheds where hygienic milking was impossible, and yards that resembled an Italian bog after heavy rain and a heavier bombardment, have given place to roomy weatherproof structures of the walk-through variety with concrete floors and yards. Instead of rutted tracks, graded roads now give good access to all parts of the settlement.