

1945
NEW ZEALAND

NATIVE DEPARTMENT
THE DEVELOPMENT AND SETTLEMENT OF NATIVE LANDS
AND THE PROVISION OF HOUSES FOR MAORIS

(STATEMENT BY THE HON. H. G. R. MASON, NATIVE MINISTER, UPON THE PROGRESS OF)

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Leave

GENERAL REPORT

THIS report, which deals with the operations of the Board of Native Affairs during the financial year ended 31st March, 1945, sets out in concise form the principal activities undertaken throughout the year in connection with the development, settlement, and farming of Native lands and lands owned or occupied by Maoris, and in provision of housing accommodation for Maoris. A report upon the other activities of the Native Department is contained in a separate parliamentary paper (G.-9).

The Board of Native Affairs was constituted under the Board of Native Affairs Act, 1934-35, and consists of the following members :—

The Native Minister (Chairman) ;
The Under-Secretary of the Native Department ;
The Financial Adviser to the Government ;
The Under-Secretary for Lands ;
The Valuer-General ;
The Director-General of Agriculture ; and
Three other persons appointed by the Governor-General in Council.

The principal duty of the Board of Native Affairs, as defined by statute, is to promote the settlement and more effective utilization by Maoris of Native land and of land owned or occupied by Maoris, and to encourage them to engage in farming and in other industries related thereto. This duty, of course, takes in horticultural pursuits as well, and the progress made in this branch of activity will be referred to later in the report. The statutory provisions which enable houses to be provided for Maoris are contained in the Native Housing Act, 1935, and its amendments.

The settlement of the Maori upon his own lands offers perhaps one of the widest avenues for his advancement. The Board of Native Affairs is therefore steadily pursuing the policy, first adopted in 1929, of developing unproductive Native lands with the assistance of funds provided by the State, and a large section of the Maori people is thus being afforded the opportunity of earning a living under conditions which they find most suitable. The results already manifested under this policy are distinctly encouraging. Development schemes now embrace a total area of over 1,169,865 acres, of which more than 804,045 acres are in the course of being either developed and improved or farmed as settled holdings. The number of individual farmers already established is now 1,892, and these settlers, together with some 2,000 other farm workers, support a very considerable number of dependants, estimated to be in excess of 20,000.

In recent years the Maori people have unquestionably exhibited a greater trust and confidence in the policy and the mechanism of a Native land development scheme. Much of their former reserve and reluctance to bring their lands under the scheme, probably engendered by the memory of past grievances in relation to their Native lands, is disappearing, and it is reasonable to hope that in the not very distant future it will have wholly gone.

The Maori is naturally a son of the soil, and he brings to his husbandry a certain acquaintance with agriculture in its elementary form and an intelligence which makes him an apt pupil who is very easily taught. The desire to attain competence and efficiency in modern farming practice and methods is distinctly encouraged by the spirit of emulation and healthy competition which is present in the Maori character ; and these desirable qualities can be fostered by an understanding, tactful, and sympathetic policy of supervision and farming education. It would be indeed suprising, therefore, if the Maori failed to respond.

During the initial stage of development when the land is being cleared, grassed, and fenced, most Maori farmers find themselves in congenial surroundings, as day-to-day progress holds their interest in the project. It is at a later stage, when the land has been stocked, and entered into production, when maintenance of stock, pastures, and improvements are necessary, that the farmer must learn to sustain