

REPORT ON NATIVE-LAND DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES.

“A.” TOKERAU (NORTH AUCKLAND) MAORI LAND DISTRICT.

THE development and settlement of lands owned or occupied by Maoris in the region to the north of Auckland was well under way before the passing of the legislation of 1929, when for the first time in the history of the Dominion Parliament decided to grant direct assistance from State funds for the development and farming of Native lands. Until the winter of 1930, when the provisions of the new legislation were applied to the northern lands, almost the only assistance given to Natives and secured on lands owned by them was granted by the Tokerau Maori Land Board out of funds administered by it for Maori beneficiaries. At the 31st of March, 1931, its advances stood at £43,900, of which the Te Kao scheme accounted for £27,245. The total number of units assisted was 120, including fifty-one at Te Kao. The latter scheme was launched on the 6th November, 1925, and at the 31st March, 1929, the expenditure thereon amounted to £25,245.

CONSOLIDATION OF TITLES.

The constant pressure exerted by local bodies in regard to defaults made by Native communities and landowners in the payment of rates led the Government in 1927 to consider and take steps for a complete stocktaking of the position of Native lands in the North Auckland, King-country, Rotorua, and Bay of Plenty districts in extension of the policy that had already been applied to the East Coast and Urewera country.

A special staff was organized for the North Auckland District, and was attached to the Native Land Court Office at Auckland. It commenced the preliminary survey of the problems of the territory early in 1928. The tremendous proportions of the undertaking may be gathered from the facts stated hereunder, which have been laboriously assembled and checked by the consolidation staff. The staff of the Auckland office had to be strengthened for the emergency.

For the purposes of consolidation of interests the district was subdivided into four, as follows :—

Lands affected by Consolidation Schemes.

Name of Scheme.	Total Area.		Number of Titles.	Number of Owners.
	A.	R. P.		
Mangonui (comprising counties of Mangonui and Whangaroa)	131,442	0 25	1,082	19,760
Bay of Islands (comprising counties of Whangarei and Bay of Islands, and Kaikohe Town Board District)	201,733	0 12	2,201	30,203
Hokianga (comprising County of Hokianga and Kohukohu Town Board District)	114,567	1 04	1,719	18,742
Kaipara (comprising counties of Waitemata, Rodney, Otamatea, Hobson, and Great Barrier)	74,603	1 10	477	7,766
Totals	522,345	3 11	5,479	76,471

The titles were necessarily separate and distinct. The name of any one individual might, on the other hand, occur in the titles of many blocks, either as an original owner or by succession, and these blocks might be distributed over many counties. Again, the share of an individual or the shares of himself, his wife, and family might be so small in each of these blocks as to render them useless, unless they could be sold or leased. The purpose of a consolidation scheme is to bring about the aggregation of these shares on a net value basis in localities suited to individuals or families, and so defined as to conform as far as possible to the requirements of modern settlement. The consolidation staff is required in the wholesale readjustment to work out to the last penny the net worth of the shares of every individual and account for the same in the new locations that may be evolved.

The four schemes comprised Native-owned lands in ten counties and two Town Board districts. The governing bodies of these were interested in varying degrees in the efficient occupation and settlement of Native lands within their boundaries. It was difficult for them to appreciate the severe handicaps inherent in the nature of the Native land titles. They had constantly before them the figures of outstanding Native rates, which mounted higher and higher as the counties expanded their roading and borrowing policies.

In the stocktaking, which is the essential preliminary to the ascertainment of the value of the individual interests held by Natives in land, the net value of those interests cannot be arrived at and stabilized until the liabilities against the same are assessed and discounted in any scheme for aggregating those interests in one or more compact holdings, defined by proper fencing boundaries and having access to the roading scheme of the district. The plan of the consolidation schemes operating in the North Auckland region was to achieve a reasonable measure of aggregation of the interests of individuals or of families or of associated manageable groups, so that in regard at least to local taxation liability should attach in as clear and as definite a manner as in the case of European holdings; in regard to farming the handicaps of promiscuous occupation inherent in the communal system might be reduced