

In addition to developing large blocks of land prior to cutting up for settlement, advances are being made by the Lands Development Board to individual settlers who have taken up undeveloped Crown land. To date approximately £188,000 has been advanced to 435 selectors, and the scheme, which is being closely supervised by the Board, is giving good results in the development of unimproved country and a consequent increase in production. Settlers generally are meeting the charges on their loans in a satisfactory manner.

Development and improvement of Native lands is also being pushed forward, the work being carried out under two distinct systems according to the nature and size of the holdings and the willingness of the Native communities to co-operate in their efforts. In the North Auckland peninsula, for instance, where the Native lands are widely scattered in more or less small areas, the assisted unit system is adopted. Under this system, where the property is suitable for development, the occupier is provided with the materials required, and the development work is carried out under supervision, in most cases without wages or other payment, according to the plan of work laid out for him by the Department's field officers.

Native land development.

The other system adopted, where there is a large area of unoccupied or partially occupied land, consists of development in a comprehensive manner by the Department's own workmen under the direction and supervision of departmental officers. The workmen are drawn from the owners of the lands being dealt with, but in some cases colonies of trained workmen have been introduced from other districts with the consent of the owners of the land in order that the local men may receive instruction in such work as fencing and cultivation. As it requires at least two years to bring virgin land to the point of production, the men thus receive an agricultural training for that period. When the land is ready for stocking with dairy herds, subdivision into suitable areas is proceeded with, and selected workmen placed on the sections as milkers on wages for another two years. The operations have not yet reached the third stage, which will consist of a further period as share milkers. All workmen will, it is anticipated, in this way receive a farm training over a period of five or six years, after which they are expected to be qualified to work their sections successfully.

At the 31st March, 1933, there were 1,050 separate holdings in active production either under the assisted unit system or being carried on by selected wage milkers, and this number will be considerably increased each year as the development of the land now in hand is completed and selections are made ready for stocking. The number of cows being milked during the present season exceeds twenty thousand.

The third phase of land development is being carried out under the small farm plan. As honourable members are aware, the object of this plan is the settlement of unemployed workers on the land, thereby providing them with a permanent occupation in our basic industries, where their efforts will indirectly assist in providing work for other persons at present unemployed. It has taken some time to overcome initial difficulties and get things moving. As from the opening of the current financial year, however, the administration of the scheme has been taken in hand by a Small Farms Board working in close collaboration with the existing organization in both field and office of the Lands and Survey Department.

Small farm plan.

All suitable Crown land has been set aside for the purpose, but, unfortunately, there is not a great deal of idle Crown land that is suitable. Accordingly, for the success of the scheme, it is essential that private lands held in too large areas should be more readily made available, but to date the response by owners has been disappointing, and the Government may have to give consideration to recourse to the powers of compulsory acquisition provided for in the Small Farms (Relief of Unemployment) Act, 1932-33. In some cases where large areas are held the Board is reconditioning the deteriorated land, in consideration of which the owners cede portions to the Crown for settlement. The scheme is to be extended as much as possible.

There is, however, one very satisfactory feature of the scheme, and that is the immediate absorption of unemployed on land development work. The Small