

inspected by the two Rangers in charge. They reported upon 753 holdings, comprising an area of 102,181 acres, the required improvements thereon being £100,306, and the value of those actually effected being £182,441, showing a balance of £82,135 in favour of the tenants. It follows, therefore, that as a whole excellent progress has been made, and it has been ascertained that the tenants have complied with requirements, except as to a few localities specified.

The settlers in the villages, which comprise 20 in number, generally speaking have also made good progress with their improvements, and are obtaining satisfactory returns from their holdings, and may be considered to be well established. Indeed, it may be said that in many instances these settlements have been very successful; but where the holdings are too small in area, and situated in out-of-the-way localities, it follows that they merely constitute homes for the tenants, who have to go abroad for employment and means to maintain themselves and families.

The Rangers' reports upon the estates which have been subdivided and occupied under the Land for Settlements Acts will be found pleasant reading. The Epuni, Maungaraki, and Paparangi Settlements, in the vicinity of Wellington, are good examples of prosperous and contented settlements, and the five settlements in the Rangitikei district may be classed as in a satisfactory condition as regards their occupation, progress, and future.

Some of the best examples of improved-farm settlements exist in this district, where there are altogether 15 settlements, with 176 holdings. The great bulk of them are well established and prosperous. The few which were started at too early a period in the back country have, from the absence of the necessary conditions making for success, struggled under all the attendant drawbacks, and have made slow progress. The extension of roads and railway, and the influx of population, should ultimately lead to the success of these also.

Marlborough Land District.

The two Rangers in this district visited 467 holdings during the past twelve months, comprising an area of 299,365 acres. On these properties improvements to the value of £70,222 were required to be made by the Act, but the amount actually effected was £159,462, the number of defaulters through various causes being only 49, or 10 per cent. of the whole.

All the tenants who hold leases or licenses under the improvement and residential conditions of the Act, except those on the north bank of the Wairau, are reported as having comfortable and well-equipped homesteads, to have made good progress, and to have every expectation of a successful future.

The holdings under the Land for Settlements Acts, which are a considerable feature of the close settlement in this district, are reported to be generally in a satisfactory position.

Nelson Land District.

During the year the two Rangers inspected and reported on 171 properties, with an area of 21,317 acres. It was found that improvements to the value of £10,277 had been effected in place of the £6,285 required by the Act, whilst those tenants in arrears with improvements, &c., amounted to 46, or 26 per cent. of the total.

It will be gathered from the Commissioner's report that the progress and conditions of the 1,313 Crown tenants are on the whole satisfactory. This is indicated by the fact that rents are promptly paid and the arrears are very trifling.

Westland Land District.

Out of the 148 properties inspected, totalling an area of 23,566 acres, it was found that there were only 24 cases of non-compliance, which equals 16 per cent. of the holdings reported on; whilst the value of improvements effected as a whole was £16,702, being an excess over the statutory requirements of £4,864.

This district suffered from the common disadvantages of the past season in regard to the lateness of the spring and the absence of settled fine weather. Nevertheless, the Commissioner reports that good hay and root crops were secured, and that there was a much better yield of butter. The extension of dairying has given a great impetus to cultivation and farming generally, and led to extensive improvements being carried out on the farms in the settled districts. The energy and sustained efforts on the more recent settlements is drawn attention to, and the time is said to be not distant when the West Coast will be independent of importations of cattle and sheep. The outlook is distinctly promising.