

National Endowments.—In terms of the National Endowments Act of last session the following aggregate areas of land at present under lease or license are embraced within the scheme as from the 1st April, 1908 :—

	Number.	Area.			Annual Rent.		
		A.	R.	P.	£	s.	d.
Renewable Lease—							
Ordinary Crown lands (rural) ..		118	3	0		11	4
Ordinary Crown lands (village homestead)	4	29	3	24		1	14 0
Small grazing-runs	210	528,553	0	0	10,200	16	10
Pastoral runs	54	1,675,429	0	0	26,447	7	2
Totals	269	2,204,130	2	24	36,653	9	4

INSPECTIONS AND RANGERS' REPORTS.

The value of the improvements effected by selectors, as shown by the reports of the Crown Lands Rangers, is still largely in excess of the amount stipulated in the conditions under which the lands are held. A reference to the tables will show that at the date of the last inspections the excess over actual requirements in respect of the holdings inspected amounted to no less a sum than £86,187. This, of itself, must be regarded as eminently satisfactory.

As regards the progress of settlement generally, it is pleasing to be able to state that, notwithstanding a considerable check through drought in the early part of the season, the final outcome of the year's operations has been of a favourable and successful character. The low price of wool is certainly a matter for regret, but as against that the prices for sheep have been good, while the proceeds from grain-growing and the dairying industry have been satisfactory. In confirmation of this, attention is directed to the following remarks of Crown Lands Ranger O'Neill :—

“*Ordinary Crown Lands.*—The past season has not been altogether favourable to settlers in the northern part of Otago. Owing to drought the ground was too hard to admit of seasonable cultivation. The spring set in dry, and, though the early part of the season showed promise of good grass, the continuance of drought and heat caused an unfortunate set-back. The grain-crops did fairly well until about January, but for want of rain the grain in many cases did not properly develop, the result being that yields came short of the general standard. In the Oamaru district many good yields of wheat have been obtained, and the grain is of excellent quality. The prices obtaining are good, and what the farmer lost in point of small returns has been more than made up by the excellence of prices. The dairy industry also suffered greatly through the drought. The pastures did not get a fair chance during any part of the season, hence milk-yields were low, and the cattle became poor in condition. Those following pastoral pursuits were heavy losers through the low price of wool, and many farmers received only half as much for their clips as they did the previous year. Good lambing percentages have been obtained, and the stock generally are now in fair condition. The root-crop has been poor, and, should a severe winter follow, it is to be feared that heavy losses of sheep may result through want of sufficient winter feed.

“In the Central Otago district practically the same conditions exist. The drought has been severely felt, and has left provision for winter very short. An open mild winter, however, may be hoped for, and under such circumstances the loss of root-crops may not be so great. Perhaps the part of the central district most affected is the low-lying country, where in many cases the creeks actually ceased running. The higher or pastoral country escaped well—in fact, was the part that produced the only reliable feed during the past two seasons.

“In the southern district the season was much drier than usual, and many of the smaller streams dried up altogether. The south, however, has a better rainfall than the north or central, and it is also better adapted for resisting the direct effects of drought. Good grain-yields prevailed, and the root-crops have done very well under the circumstances. Dairying has not been up to the usual standard in all cases, but some localities have more than held their own.

“Generally speaking, the Crown tenants in Otago have made fair progress during the year. The grain-yields were not large, but the good prices more than made up for any loss in that direction. Smaller farmers and dairymen will feel the want of root-crops during the coming winter, but, as there is this year a much greater quantity of straw available than there was last season, the loss of roots may not be so badly felt. The settlers as a whole have no serious grievances, and their prospects are good.”

With regard to the lakes district, Ranger Mackenzie states that in the Hawea, Wanaka, and Tarras Districts the yield of grain has been exceptionally large this year, and of first-class quality. In the Shot-over District continued drought caused generally poor crops, although the grain was of fair quality. At Earnslaw, Glenorchy, and Upper Wakatipu the crops were poor, the land being of inferior quality. In the Makarora District very little progress has been made, and the flax-mills have all but closed down. Although the season was a very dry one, the lakes district is upon the whole in a fair state of prosperity, and inquiries for land are being continually made.

Ranger Mackenzie in his report makes reference to further matters as follows : “The prosperity of Cromwell and the Clutha Valley depends greatly on water for irrigation. A private company is endeavouring to procure a supply from the river, which will be a great boon if successful. Another thing urgently required is a fruit-preserving factory to encourage fruit-growing, there being a deplorable waste of fruit under present conditions. There has been another destructive fire at the Rere Lake Bush, but the damage was not so extensive as was at first supposed, as the fire began close to the lake and ran well up the hill. Every effort has been made to trace the origin of these fires, but so far without success.”