

There have been purchased and subdivided fifty-three properties, now held by 1,322 tenants, and carrying 4,997 souls. No one who travels through these settlements can fail to observe the unmistakable evidences there are of prosperity, nor can he help being convinced that the occupation of arable lands in living areas is the policy which makes for national development on sound and progressive lines.

That the Crown tenants, generally speaking, are drawn from a good class is beyond doubt. They are observing the conditions of their leases, and it is pleasing to note that systematic crop-rotation is observed by them. They find that it is an important factor in their returns from the land. Here and there a selector may fail, as in every other walk of life.

The frequently repeated assertion that the Land Board is placing on the land as selectors tradesmen and others who were not brought up to agricultural pursuits, and that these men are doomed to failure, has nothing in it. Many of the most successful tenants are drawn from these classes. In farming, as in other callings, brains and industry are the chief factors of success.

The year now closed has, broadly speaking, been one of prosperity throughout the Dominion. In no part of the Dominion has that prosperity been enjoyed more than in Canterbury. The season has been one of the best possible. The wool-clip was good, the lambing was good, dairying excellent, and, although the yields of wheat and oats were below the usual standard in some districts owing to premature ripening and unfavourable harvesting weather, a payable average will have been maintained. Good values have been obtained from wool, lambs, dairy-produce, and wheat. This prosperity is, of course, shared by the Crown tenants, and there is every prospect that the winter can be faced with confidence.

LANDS OPENED FOR SELECTION DURING THE YEAR.

With the exception of the three estates, Fyvie, Tripp, and Buddo, which have been acquired and offered for closer settlement during the year, and to which special reference is made in my report under the Land for Settlements Act, the area of the land offered for disposal in this district during the past year has been extremely limited. The areas offered have included one section of 564 acres near Hanmer Springs, offered for optional selection, and taken up under the occupation-with-right-of-purchase system; two pastoral runs, aggregating 3,824 acres, near Mount Somers and Lake Ellesmere; two allotments, totalling 272 acres, situated at Motunau, in North Canterbury, offered under the renewable lease system only; and miscellaneous reserves, comprising a total area of 499 acres, offered for lease by public competition for various terms.

LAND-TENURES.

There has been little change in the areas of lands held under the various tenures. The total area of land alienated from the Crown under the freehold tenure has been only 47 acres 1 rood 25 perches, out of which 24 acres is excess area on previous alienations, and 17 acres represent the acquisition of freehold of lands held under the deferred-payment, perpetual-lease, and occupation-with-right-of-purchase systems, in respect of which the holders exercised their statutory rights of fulfilment of the occupation-conditions required of them.

The number of holders under the renewable-lease tenure has been augmented by the new selections of land offered under the Land for Settlements Act, and by some exchanges of similar lands previously selected, from lease in perpetuity to renewable lease, under section 192 of the Land Act, 1908, the object being to secure the reductions of rent arising from the revaluations provided by the Act.

The total number of tenants of all classes on the books of the Department for the Canterbury District on the 31st March, 1910, was 3,286, occupying a total area of 4,130,514 acres and 18 perches, and paying an annual rental of £151,300 2s. 3d.

REVENUE AND PAYMENT OF RENT.

The total revenue collected during the year from all sources was £138,888 13s. 1d., and the arrears of rent due on the 31st March, 1910, was £6,537 15s. 2d., owing by 132 tenants. This represents 4 per cent. of the total number of tenants, and about 4½ per cent. of the total annual rent-roll of the district. Out of the arrears mentioned, a sum of £4,672 is due by holders in the Kinloch Settlement alone, these tenants having, as a measure of relief, in consideration of losses sustained at the outset of their career, been allowed to postpone for three years the payment of two half-years' rent due in 1908 and 1909, the whole of these postponed payments being now counted as arrears. Excluding these special arrears, the remaining amount outstanding represents slightly under 1¼ per cent. of the total annual rental.

In a few cases the arrears somewhat exceed normal proportions, but with steady yet gentle pressure there is every prospect of these being reduced, for hardly any of them can be regarded as hopeless cases. The Crown, moreover, is fully protected, except in the case of leases under the Workers' Dwellings Act, by the value of improvements effected or paid for by the tenant on the Crown property.

REBATES OF RENT.

The aggregate amount of rebates granted during the year under section 116 of the Land Act, 1908, and section 55 of the Land for Settlements Act, 1908, was £8,118 18s. 4d. The number of Crown tenants who participated in this privilege was 1,857.

The question as to the extent to which the rebate of rent increases the amount paid for good-will of leaseholds is worthy of consideration. That some good-wills of leases include the capitalised value of rebates is beyond doubt—for instance, a leasehold has been offered, the advertised rental thereof being the rent reserved in the lease minus the rebate of one-tenth of each half-yearly instalment allowed