

NOXIOUS WEEDS.

The eradication of noxious weeds on Crown lands and reserves has received attention in the northern part of this district, but the Ranger did nothing in regard to this matter in the Buller and Inangahua Counties, as it would be very little use unless a combined effort were made by the local bodies and other authorities, the whole district being more or less overrun by noxious weeds. The Inangahua Valley, in particular, is in a very bad state.

CROWN TENANTS' IMPROVEMENTS.

During the past year an area of 6,725 acres has been felled and grassed on lands held by Crown tenants, and this does not include the Buller and Inangahua Counties. A rough estimate of the area felled in these counties is an additional 1,200 acres.

TENURES.

Nearly the whole of the Crown lands available for settlement are situated either within the national endowment area or in a mining district, so that the tenures are chiefly renewable lease and leases under Part VIII of the Land Act, 1908, or pastoral licenses.

ARREARS.

The total arrears amount to £1,089 14s. 9d., and of this amount £543 7s. 8d. is owing on land-for-settlement lands, chiefly on the Wangapeka Settlement. The balance of arrears is distributed amongst the other tenures, and excluding the rent owing on land for settlements, the payment of rent is fairly satisfactory.

THE DAIRY INDUSTRY.

This industry is in a very flourishing condition, and is capable of still further development as the flat lands in the back country are brought under grass and the road-access is improved. At present there are five butter-factories at work, situated in the Waimea, Takaka, and Collingwood Counties, one in the Buller, and one in the Inangahua County, and two cheese-factories in the Collingwood district. A butter-factory was established at Murchison during the year, and is a great success. The output of butter for the season was 356 tons, and of cheese 160 tons, with a total value of £39,000.

THE TIMBER INDUSTRY.

In the northern portion of the district this industry is on the decline, owing to the bulk of the available timber on Crown and freehold lands being cut out. Most of the mills are small, so as to be easily removed from one part of the district to another to cut small areas of bush left in previous years. There are forty-five mills working in this part of the district, of which forty are cutting on freehold land, four on Crown land, and one on Native land. The yearly output was 6,442,000 ft. of mixed timbers. In the southern part of the district, in the Buller and Inangahua Counties, there are still large areas of timber available. There are thirty-two mills in these districts, of which twenty-seven are working on Crown lands and five on freehold. The output for the year was 7,250,000 ft. The industry is not in a flourishing condition, and the total quantity of timber cut was 13,692,000 ft., showing a decrease of nearly 2,000,000 ft. on last year's return.

THE FLAX INDUSTRY.

This industry has been at a very low ebb for a considerable period, owing to the low price of fibre. In the northern portion of this district there are seven mills, and these only produced 140 tons last year, valued at £2,800. In the southern part of the district there are six mills working in a small way, with the hope of a rise in the price of fibre. There are no large areas of flax in the Nelson District, the growth being limited chiefly to the sea-coast and river-frontage and some small swamps, and the industry can never grow to any great extent.

THE COAL INDUSTRY.

In the northern portion of the Nelson District very little development has taken place during the year, and, although a considerable area is known to be coal-bearing, very little has been done to place this product on the market. Prospecting operations have been carried on to a large extent, and two good seams have been found within three miles of the port at Collingwood, and with a fair outlay of capital should give satisfactory results. Seams have also been found five miles from Belgrove and two miles from Nelson, in the Brook Street Stream, and operations are now in active progress to enable the coal to be placed on the market. The Puponga Mine—about thirteen miles from Collingwood—is the only mine producing coal at present. In the Buller County this industry has assumed very large proportions, and Westport—the shipping port—is in a very flourishing condition. There are four large mines in active operation—Denniston and Millerton Mines, owned by the Westport Coal Company; the State mine, at Seddonville; and the Westport-Stockton Company's mine. The latter company began operations only last year, and is just beginning to make headway after erecting a most complete plant, all worked by electricity. The prolonged strike in New South Wales enabled these mines to dispose of very much larger quantities of coal, and the output exceeded last year's by 100,000 tons. These mines give employment to over fifteen hundred men. The mines are all connected by railway with Westport, and the Westport Harbour is capable of berthing steamers of 4,000 tons. The sum of £200,000 is to be expended shortly to give increased wharfage and dock accommodation. The output of coal from Westport for the year was 718,419 tons. Large deposits of coal exist in the Inangahua district, in the vicinity of Reefton, and will no doubt in time be worked to advantage. The output from the many small mines was 4,000 tons, mainly used for household purposes.