

1910.
NEW ZEALAND.

CANTERBURY PASTORAL RUNS, THE LICENSES OVER WHICH TERMINATE ON FEBRUARY 28, 1911

(REPORT OF INSPECTION OF), BY MR. REEVES AND MR. PARISH.

Laid on the Table of the House of Representatives by Leave.

Messrs. H. M. REEVES, RICHARD PARISH, and ROBERT GUTHRIE to the Hon. the MINISTER OF LANDS.
SIR,—

Lands Office, Christchurch, N.Z., 19th October, 1909.

In accordance with the instructions of the Acting Minister of Lands, dated 27th August, 1909, we have inspected those pastoral runs of Canterbury the licenses over which terminate on the 28th February, 1911. The only run not examined was No. 237, known as the Upper Hurunui, which we were instructed by the Commissioner of Crown Lands, Christchurch, not to visit. In making our report we should like to point out that our inspection was conducted with the utmost speed consistent with the efficient accomplishment of our task, and that we are greatly indebted to the tenants and managers of the runs visited for their hospitality, and for the facilities and assistance unanimously afforded us in carrying out our duties.

Owing to the fact that Mr. Guthrie felt it impossible for him to agree with many of the conclusions of his fellow-Commissioners, he suggested that he should embody his opinions in a separate report, and this proposal the Commission indorsed. On comparing his report with that of the majority, you will observe that, while on several points there is a difference of opinion, on many others the three Commissioners are substantially in agreement.

We have, &c.,

H. M. REEVES,
RICHARD PARISH,
ROBERT GUTHRIE,
Per H. M. REEVES.

The Hon. the Minister of Lands, Wellington.

REPORT OF MR. REEVES AND MR. PARISH.

SIR,—

Lands Office, Christchurch, N.Z., 19th October, 1909.

In beginning our report we should like to emphasize the fact that we are in thorough sympathy with the principle of closer settlement, and that in making our inspection we have been animated not only by the announced desire of the Government to promote settlement wherever practicable, but also by our own convictions. This being the case, it is almost unnecessary to remind you that in making our recommendations we have gone as far in the direction of subdividing the pastoral runs under notice as is, in our belief, consistent with the welfare of the State's property and with the prosperity of the incoming tenants. After careful investigation we are left with the conclusion that the question of settling the back-country runs of Canterbury is one which should be approached with the greatest caution. However much the State may desire to increase the number of persons occupying its pastoral runs, there are certain obvious facts which it cannot lose sight of, and these facts all point to the necessity for the utmost care. With very little exception, the land inspected by the Commission is not what, for want of a better definition, may be termed "small men's country." Its situation, remote from the sea and plains, and at a high altitude—

stretching in many cases to the snow-line—renders it susceptible to the ravages of the weather, and unattractive to settlers with wives and children. The annual loss in stock, owing to the severity of the climate, is never small, and at more or less regular intervals storms have occurred which have inflicted very serious financial hardship and even ruin. Unfortunately, it is not yet possible for the runholders to safeguard themselves against snow losses, and even where they can minimize the risk this can only be accomplished at a cost which must add not inconsiderably to the tenants' rent. Again, the majority of the runs are so far from the rail-head that the cost of living is no insignificant item, and the expense of sending away the output of the station is a very serious matter indeed. Yet again, the number of women who will submit to the conditions of existence imposed by the back country must necessarily be limited. Granted that there are women who have faced and endured, and are ready to continue facing and enduring, the hardships and the monotony of the life in exchange for the companionship of their husbands, it is impossible in the case of children for the family tie to remain unbroken. As soon as education becomes necessary the children must be sent down country, and probably the mother must accompany them. This course, entailing, as it often does, the maintenance of two separate establishments, would naturally bear heavily on the small settler of limited means. As a matter of fact, it is not out of place to pause and consider if persons of limited means will ever get a strong footing in the back country unless assisted financially by the State. From information we have been able to gather, we are inclined to think that private money-lenders will be extremely chary of making advances on this class of security to any but persons of substance, or with a wide practical experience of snow country; and even in the latter case it would probably be essential for the borrower to possess not inconsiderable means. In the event of a measure of subdivision being approved, these are considerations which should not be overlooked by the State, and they might be profitably borne in mind by the Land Board in dealing with the credentials of applicants.

An argument that has been urged against the proposed subdivision of these runs is that the back country of Canterbury has a utility peculiar to itself, in that it is suitable chiefly for merino sheep, and that settlement might prejudice its value in this respect. This is an argument which we earnestly commend to your attention. Unless it could be shown that holders of small blocks would be certain to retain merinos, and continue to breed either merino or first-cross sheep on the lines of the present flocks, we fear that transition from large stations to small runs would be detrimental to the sheep-flocks of Canterbury as a whole. It is generally admitted as an established fact that Canterbury meat owes its claim to superiority over other brands in no small degree to the strain of merino running through so many of the Canterbury sheep. Any step calculated to diminish further the already decreasing numbers of the province's merinos would scarcely be justified, unless it could be shown that in other respects the step would be likely to prove very beneficial indeed. It has even been suggested that a condition should be included in the fresh leases making it compulsory for tenants to hold nothing but merino and first-cross sheep. Compulsion, of course, might not be desirable, but we think nevertheless that the Government might consider the advisableness of encouraging tenants to stock with the class of sheep mentioned. We noticed in some cases a disposition on the part of the tenants to substitute half-bred and three-quarter-bred for merino sheep; but there are good grounds for supposing that this is due to the fact that, owing to their leases being on the point of expiration, they are desirous of breeding a class of sheep which is more saleable than the merino. Given the necessary encouragement in the shape of stability of tenure, we feel sure that the majority of the incoming tenants could be induced to revert to the merino.

For the reasons specified, it is clear that, for the present and probably for many years to come, the State's back-country runs will have to be worked in fairly large tracts. In the meanwhile the State can protect its own interests, and at the same time assist its tenants, by amending some of the conditions under which these runs are let. It might, for example, take steps to conserve the native grasses. In some instances good results might certainly accrue if the tenants were induced to surface-sow with English grasses; but in the majority, especially in the Mackenzie country, the best—in fact, almost the only effective—means of increasing the feeding-capacity of the runs would be to foster the tussock and other native pasture. There are two ways to attain this desired result: the one is to persuade the tenants to stock their holdings lightly: the other is to induce them, wherever practicable and necessary, to partition off their winter country. Both objects might be achieved by a system of low rentals, combined with certain compulsory conditions regarding fencing. A popular axiom in the backblocks that low rents mean light stocking, and that light stocking means a reduction in losses from snow, is no doubt true up to a certain point. If a run is lightly stocked, it follows that the sheep are generally able to survive the rigours of the winter more successfully than if they enter the winter low in condition, owing to a shortage of feed. Some sensible pastoralists realize this fact, and are already in the habit of stocking as lightly as circumstances, in the shape of rent and in some cases a thumping goodwill, will permit. As regards the others, the State should have no compunction, as a return for its making the rents as low as circumstances will allow, in compelling its tenants to abide by certain reasonable restrictions as to the number and breed of sheep to be carried. Nor can we perceive any objection to a system under which the tenant, in return for obtaining a run at a low rental, should be obliged, where in the opinion of the State it is necessary and practicable, to separate his winter from his summer country. We cannot say that we noticed any specific cases where the number of sheep being carried was in excess of the capacity of the run, although, in spite of the spring being an unusually early one, we perceived no signs that feed was being allowed to run to waste. At the same time, there is very general evidence in the Mackenzie basin of the winter country being undesirably bare. This may be attributed partly to the paucity of winter country, and partly to the fact that, owing to the lack of dividing-fences, stock are in the habit of running indiscriminately over winter and summer country during the summer months. As a result, the winter grazing never gets a rest, for the reason that, being the warmest and sweetest, it is the most attractive to sheep. The inevitable consequence is that the tussocks on the warm slopes are afforded

little or no opportunity of seeding, and are each year providing less feed for the winter months. To protect the winter pastures they should be fenced off. If this were done at the tenant's expense the State would be the gainer, for the reason that its property would be improved, and the tenant himself would reap a rich return for his outlay in the shape of an increased revenue from his run, and the enhanced value of the goodwill, should he desire to sell it. Should the Government consider this proposal worth carrying into effect, it might also consider if it would not be expedient to impose a time-limit for the completion of the fencing. The imposition of a time-limit or other restrictive conditions would perhaps tend to prevent trafficking in these leases until such times as the fencing conditions had been carried out.

Although we have been at pains to indicate the obstacles to the settlement of these runs, our object has been to show not that subdivision of some kind is impracticable, but that it can easily be overdone. To place men on small blocks of this country would entail loss, and infinite worry to the Government, and at the same time inflict hardship on the tenant. The winter grazing, especially in the Mackenzie country, is of so limited an area compared with the summer country that, unless runs are to be altogether without the former, they must be given large tracts of the latter. There are thousands of acres of the Mackenzie country which by a simple process of geometry could be cut into 5,000-acre sections, carrying from 1,000 to 1,500 sheep. But, if this were done, a few of the blocks would consist entirely of winter, and the majority entirely of summer, country, which would mean disaster to the tenants. As a rule, to which there are very few exceptions indeed, the minimum carrying-capacity of the runs in the country we have inspected should be 6,000 sheep. In a few instances this rule might be disregarded, but to do so would be to grant a concession to the principle of closer settlement rather than to benefit the State or the individual. In one case, at the lower end of the Mackenzie country, this concession might have been made without reservation but for the presence of a particularly active tussock grub. This grub has already laid waste a huge area of the flat country of several runs, and now threatens the slopes. Its ravages, unless they are checked, cannot fail to have a most disastrous effect on the State's property within the Mackenzie basin.

Before passing to a detailed reference to the runs inspected, we should like to point out that a widespread opinion appears to exist in favour of the State treating the outgoing tenants with something more than the barest legal justice. It is admitted, of course, that the tenants have no legal claim on the State: but it is held that, owing to the system under which their freeholds were originally taken up, they ought to be treated as leniently as possible—indeed, with some measure of generosity. It has been suggested that, as the State might not care to purchase the freehold of the homesteads, it might consider the advisableness of amending the law in the direction of assisting those tenants who under the existing law might, having lost their leases, be left with a block of freehold which, while valueless to themselves, they were unable to dispose of except at a price much below that at which they were originally obliged to purchase it from the State. To meet this difficulty it is proposed that in the event of a run being subdivided the outgoing tenant should be granted the option of leasing one block at a rent to be assessed by the State for a further term, while in the case of a run which is not subdivided the outgoing tenant should receive a corresponding privilege. Naturally in each case the tenant would have to comply with the regulations prohibiting the possession of more than one leasehold, and, in the event of the proposal being given effect to, the Government would doubtless take care to see that the letter as well as the spirit of the law was unbroken. Provided the necessary precautions were taken, it is difficult to see how the proposal would act other than beneficially. Where a run was subdivided a minimum of hardship would be inflicted on the outgoing tenant, while in all cases in which the option was exercised the State would have the satisfaction of retaining as its tenants individuals with a lengthy and intimate knowledge of a class of country in the successful working of which experience is the most important factor of all.

The following is a detailed report on the runs inspected:—

THE MACKENZIE COUNTRY.

No. 75; Sawdon; 27,100 Acres: Carries from 8,000 to 9,000 Sheep.

This run comprises a great deal of very dangerous country, and on its merits is scarcely capable of subdivision. Owing, however, to its proximity to the Burke's Pass Township, and the facilities afforded by the nearness of the high road, and the fact that the run is within fifteen miles of the rail-head at Fairlie, the difficulty of removing stock in the event of snow is not so great as on some of the higher runs. A portion of this run lies outside the Mackenzie Basin, fronting the Burke's Pass Township, and, if the Government thought it advisable, a block of this, capable of carrying, say, from 2,000 to 3,000 sheep, might be cut off and converted into a small run, leaving the balance, carrying some 6,000 sheep, to go with the present homestead. Included in the run are 600 acres of freehold. This run carries ewes, and (except after exceptional snow losses) maintains its own flock.

No. 76; Tekapo; 27,900 Acres: Carries 8,000 Sheep.

This is a poor run, comprising a great deal of dangerous flat and down country, with a little comparatively safe hill country at the top end. At present it is being worked in conjunction with a freehold farm situated in vicinity of Lake Pukaki, where the majority of the sheep are wintered. There is usually a heavy snow mortality here, and on four occasions at least the flock has been practically wiped out. It carries breeding-ewes, but, striking an average over a number of years, the lambing does not keep pace with the death-rate. There would be no difficulty in subdividing this run, though, owing to the reasons already given, we do not recommend this course being taken.

No. 77; Richmond; 87,000 Acres (including 30,000 Acres of Waste Land): Carries 16,000 Sheep.

Although this run includes a considerable area of well-grassed country, it is notorious for its liability to snow losses, and for the difficulties which it presents to the removal of stock in case of bad weather. In 1895 the existing tenant turned out over 20,000 sheep in the autumn, and mustered less than 300 in the following spring; and this is only one of a number of instances in which severe losses have been sustained. The run consists chiefly of southerly slopes, not steep enough to carry off snow, while there is practically no safe country on it. It could be cut into two without trouble, and with little expense, in which event the State would possess two unsafe runs, each capable of carrying 8,000 sheep, instead of one unsafe run carrying double that number. This run carries ewes, and in average seasons maintains its flock without the purchase of sheep.

No. 78; Lilybank; 70,000 Acres (including 50,000 Acres of Waste Country): Carries 6,500 Sheep.

This run is small enough already. In addition, owing to its roughness and the paucity of its winter country, it is incapable of subdivision. Though not as dangerous as Richmond, it is a poor breeding-run, owing to its being so close to the main range, and subject to the north-west blasts.

No. 80; The Mistake; 62,000 Acres (including 30,000 Acres of Waste Country): Carries 10,000 Sheep.

This run consists almost entirely of extremely high and broken country. Though not quite so unsafe as Lilybank, it is a run on which the lambings are never large. We cannot, on the whole, recommend any form of subdivision.

No. 79; Glenmore; 53,000 Acres (including 13,000 Acres of Waste Country).

This run is at present being worked in conjunction with Balmoral and Braemar; but we judge it capable of carrying about 13,000 sheep. If it were left intact, it would remain a safe run, with the proportions of winter and summer country fairly equally distributed. It could be cut into two without any trouble, but, owing to its being a long narrow block, it would have to be subdivided latitudinally. This would leave the top end a safe and in every respect a desirable run, but the bottom end with no winter country beyond a little on the upper end of Mount John. As a whole, it is admirable breeding-country.

No. 81; Part of Balmoral; 29,000 Acres. No. 82; Part of Balmoral; 40,000 Acres.

At present these blocks are being worked as a whole in conjunction with Glenmore and Braemar. We estimate the total carrying-capacity of the two at from 13,000 to 14,000 sheep, including sufficient breeding-ewes to maintain the flocks in average seasons. They consist chiefly of dangerous down country, and high table-lands, on which it is not easy to save stock in the event of snow. At the bottom end of No. 81 there is a piece of fairly safe winter country on the Old Man Range, near the homestead; but this area is altogether insufficient in a severe winter to save the flock which this particular run would carry. On the top end of No. 82 there are some good winter facings on the Jollie River. As the two runs stand now, it is inadvisable to further subdivide them. No. 82 should be left as it is, and No. 81, which is not a safe run, might be improved by the addition of a small portion of the lower end of Glenmore, including Mount John, in which case the balance of Glenmore should remain in one block. An alternative proposal is that the Government should purchase the adjoining freehold of Braemar, now being utilized as the winter country of Balmoral. If this were done, Nos. 81 and 82, with Braemar, could be cut up into four or five safe runs.

No. 83; Mount Cook; 25,000 Acres (15,000 Acres Waste Country): Carries about 6,000 Sheep.

This run is sufficiently small already, and in any case could not be easily divided, owing to its height and steepness. Moreover, it is far removed from the entrance to the Mackenzie Basin. It is good breeding-country, and, except after severe snowstorms, its flock has been maintained at its average level without the purchase of sheep. It has been in the occupation of the present lessee and his father for some forty years, and much of the success achieved by them on this run must be attributed to clever and careful management.

No. 89; Glentanner; 58,000 Acres (32,000 Acres Waste Country): Carries about 9,000 Sheep.

This run is also one of the furthest-away from the entrance to the Mackenzie Basin. The greater part of it has a northerly aspect, and, comparatively speaking, it is a safe run. It is good breeding-country, and, except in particularly unfavourable seasons, its lessees have had no difficulty in maintaining their flocks, though heavy losses are not unknown here. Owing to the high broken nature of its back country, subdivision would not be an easy matter, and if it were in two blocks it would be rather difficult to keep the flocks apart. The adjoining run (Birch Hill) would be greatly improved by the addition of a portion (say, the two top spurs) of the upper end of Glentanner, and Glentanner would then be left with a capacity of about 6,000 sheep. If the Government approved of this suggestion, it might, in exchange for the part of Glentanner indicated, resume the Mount Cook spur of Birch Hill, which it might care to utilize for acclimatization purposes.

No. 93A; Glenlyon; 124,000 Acres (76,000 Acres Bush and Waste Land): Carries 6,000 Sheep as well as some Cattle.

This run, which is beyond the basin of the Mackenzie, is too far out of the way, too scattered, and carries an insufficient number of sheep, to render it suitable for subdivision. The present lessee has spent a great deal of money and trouble in improving the run, and in every way has shown himself to be an enterprising tenant, deserving of the Government's consideration and encouragement.

No. 86; Simon's Pass; 30,600 Acres: Carries 10,000 Sheep.

This run is among a number of leases at the lower end of the Mackenzie Basin, which are less susceptible to snow, but more troubled by drought than the runs at the upper end. In many respects it is suitable for closer settlement. It is comparatively safe from snow, though affected by drought; it embraces no high country, and it provides sweet grazing, on which half-bred sheep thrive. As a breeding-run it has sent away more good merino and half-bred surplus stock than perhaps any other station in the basin. Unfortunately, the tussock-grub, to which we have referred, has swept a very large area of the flat country of this run. But for this we should have urged its subdivision into two blocks. As an alternative it might be expedient to transfer a portion of the Lake Pukaki end, sufficient to carry, say, 1,500 sheep, to the Wolds, leaving Simon's Pass with a capacity for about 8,500 sheep. In estimating the carrying-capacity of Simon's Pass, it must be borne in mind that included in the run are some 1,500 acres of freehold, capable of growing winter feed, and that without this block the carrying-capacity of the run would be materially reduced.

No. 85; The Wolds; 42,000 Acres.

This run is at present being worked in conjunction with Irishman Creek. We estimate that it is capable of carrying about 16,000 sheep. It is something of the same character, though not so safe, as Simon's Pass. Here, too, the tussock-grub is at work, though up to the present it has been less destructive than on the Simon's Pass flats. There is an outlying freehold farm of 2,000 acres on this run, which, for purposes of subdivision, we shall presume will remain with the leasehold. This run could be divided into two, and, with the Lake Pukaki block of Simon's Pass, is suitable for subdivision into three; but there are certain reserves on it which it would be necessary to incorporate in the lease.

No. 84; Irishman Creek; 23,500 Acres.

This run is being worked as part of the Wolds. We calculate its carrying-capacity to be about 7,000 sheep. This is also a "low-country" station. It is not very dangerous, though its lessees have been known to sustain pretty heavy losses in bad seasons. It is small enough in its present state.

No. 70; Haldon; 37,200 Acres.

This run is being worked in conjunction with an Education reserve, the whole, with a block of freehold, comprising the Haldon Station. The present lessee states that he is carrying 13,000 sheep on No. 70, but we are bound to add that in our opinion most impartial estimates would put the carrying-capacity at about 10,000 sheep. Portions of the run are almost bare of feed of any sort, while others are particularly well grassed. The run is already fenced into six blocks. It is comparatively safe from snow, though affected by dry weather, and is good breeding-country, though in parts it ascends to an altitude of 5,000 ft. Accepting the present lessees's estimate of its carrying-capacity as substantially correct, there is no reason why this run should not be cut into two blocks.

No. 72; Grampians; 45,000 Acres: Carries 15,000 Sheep.

This run is worked in conjunction with another block, and therefore it is impossible to arrive at its carrying-capacity with exactitude. Our estimate, though only approximate, should not, however, be very wide of the mark. It is somewhat similar country to that on Haldon, though, while scarcely so sweet, it is better grassed, and less liable to suffer from dry weather. It is fronted by 1,400 acres of freehold belonging to the present lessee, on which are grown considerable quantities of winter feed. Though it catches a fair amount of snow, it is good breeding-country, and, except in very severe seasons, its flock is self-maintaining. It can be divided into two.

No. 73; Part of Gray's Hills; 26,000 Acres.

This run has absolutely no value by itself. It is naturally poor flat, and it has been further impoverished by the tussock-grub. It is particularly liable to snow, and includes no winter country. It is impossible to determine its carrying-capacity, for the reason that it is capable of carrying sheep for only five or six months of the year. It has been suggested that it might be employed, not unprofitably, for conducting experiments in the direction of preserving native pastures, and of ascertaining what grasses (if any) are suitable for surface-sowing this class of country.

No. 74; Whalesback; 32,500 Acres.

This run has never been worked by itself, and therefore we had no guide beyond the evidence of our own eyes as to its carrying-capacity. Probably it will carry from 8,000 to 10,000 sheep. It consists principally of a narrow range, part of which lies outside the Mackenzie Basin. It is well grassed, easily fencible, and comparatively safe. Owing to its proximity to two of the exits from the basin, it is suitable for division into two, though each block would not carry more than 4,000 or 5,000 sheep. In the event of its being subdivided, the dividing-line should be drawn diagonally, so as to give each block an equal proportion of safe country.

THE ASHBURTON COUNTY.

Nos. 110A, 110B, and 111; Mesopotamia: No. 110A, 44,000 Acres (24,000 Acres Waste Country); No. 110B, 14,000 Acres (12,800 Acres Waste Country); No. 111, 18,500 Acres (12,000 Acres Waste Country).

These runs are being worked as a whole in conjunction with No. 110, a block of Education reserve, consisting of 37,900 acres. Nos. 110A, 110B, and 111 comprise entirely back country, and, owing to their broken and rugged nature and their situation, they are unsuitable for any other purpose than that for which they are at present being utilized. They are completely shut off by the reserve, which includes practically all the best country on the station. No effective method of subdivision is practicable until Nos. 110A, 110B, and 111 are united with No. 110 under one landlord. In view of this fact, it is unnecessary, if it were possible, to attempt an estimate of the carrying-capacity of these runs.

No. 112; Stronschrubie; 17,000 Acres (7,000 Acres Waste Country): Carries 3,000 Sheep.

For some years past this run has been worked by the lessee of Mesopotamia as a part of that station. It is unfit for subdivision; indeed past experience raises the doubt as to whether it can be worked profitably by itself.

No. 113; Hakatere; 54,700 Acres (17,000 Acres Waste Country). No. 114; Hakatere No. 2; 26,500 Acres (10,900 Acres Waste Country).

At present these two runs are being worked together, in conjunction with an adjoining Education reserve (Mount Possession). No. 113 consists almost entirely of broken, dangerous country, suitable only for summer feeding. In the somewhat doubtful event of its being taken up by itself, it is difficult to see how the risk to the tenant could be otherwise than very grave indeed. It might carry from 9,000 to 10,000 dry sheep. Run No. 114 includes some safe country on the Potts River, and by itself would carry from 5,000 to 6,000 sheep, including sufficient ewes to insure the maintenance of the flock without recourse to buying sheep. We cannot recommend that the two blocks should be united and let as a whole, for the reason that in this event the run would be overloaded with unsafe country. Nor can we recommend that either should be further divided. It should be borne in mind that the Potts River, which separates the two runs, is not an effective boundary in summer.

No. 116; Dunbar's; 25,000 Acres: Carries 5,750 Sheep.

This is not a safe run, and is small enough already. At present it is being worked in conjunction with the adjoining leasehold of Clent Hills.

No. 117; Lake Heron; 37,500 Acres (13,800 Acres Waste Country): Carries 11,000 Sheep.

This is a slightly safer run than Dunbar's, though by no means free from snow losses. On many occasions its flocks have been seriously depleted by storms, and, apart from the losses referred to, its average annual death-rate amounts to a thousand sheep. In seasons of average losses its lessees cannot quite maintain their flocks without buying sheep. The only way of subdividing this run would be to cut it latitudinally, in which event the lower portion would be without winter country except a trifling area on what is known as the Sugarloaf, capable of wintering less than 1,000 sheep. As the upper portion, though better supplied with winter country than the lower, would not make a really good and safe run, we cannot see that any material advantage would be gained by subdivision.

No. 118; Double Hill No. 1; 64,000 Acres (17,000 Acres Waste Country): No. 119; Double Hill No. 2, 49,500 Acres (12,500 Acres Waste Country): Carries 36,000 Sheep.

These runs are at present being worked together. They are similar in character, their principal feature being a long stretch of warm, steep, well-grassed, northerly facings fronting on the Rakaia River, backed by more or less broken and rugged country. Though not immune from storm losses, these runs enjoy a deservedly high reputation, not only from the fact that as far as back country goes they are comparatively safe, but also from the numbers and quantity of the surplus stock which they produce. They would make four admirable runs, provided care were taken in each case to apportion the winter feeding proportionately to the summer and waste country. The principal drawback to subdivision would probably be found in the quantity and costly nature of the fencing which would be entailed, and the lack of communication.

THE SELWYN COUNTY.

No. 178; Part of Lake Coleridge; 12,200 Acres (about 2,700 Acres Waste Country).

This run is at present being worked in conjunction with some 11,000 acres of freehold, 35,000 acres of Education reserve, and an 18,000-acre block of State leasehold. We estimate its carrying-capacity at about 4,500 sheep. It is, on the whole, well grassed, and it includes a sufficient proportion of winter country, while none of it could be described as unsafe. It is, however, bounded partly by Lake Coleridge and partly by the Rakaia and Wilberforce Rivers, and the adjoining freehold; and, though subdivision, if desirable, would not be difficult, it would be inadvisable, chiefly because the run is scarcely large enough for the purpose, and in a lesser degree for the reason that a considerable portion of the frontage is blocked by the freehold.

No. 179; Acheron; 18,000 Acres (13,000 Acres Waste Country).

This run consists entirely of high shingly tops. It is the back country of the adjoining Education reserve (No. 120), with which it is at present being worked. It has no value as a separate run.

THE AMURI COUNTY.

No. 233; Glynnwe; 192,000 Acres (probably more than 100,000 Acres Bush and Waste Country): Carries 20,000 Sheep and some Cattle.

This run includes some good country, but, in proportion to the bush, waste, and inferior country, this area is so small and is so situated as to preclude the possibility of a satisfactory form of subdivision. The front portion would no doubt make two nice runs; but if this were cut off the State would be left with a huge area of waste and probable unlettable country, which would become a breeding-ground for vermin and noxious weeds. Included in this run is 8,000 acres of freehold, which comprises nearly all the flat and low-lying land on the station, and its position in the centre of the leasehold would further complicate the work of subdivision.

The effect of the foregoing recommendations would be to increase the number of the runs under notice approximately from twenty-nine to forty. For the purpose of this calculation the State's portion of Mesopotamia is treated as one run.

[NOTE.—It should be understood that all detached pieces of freehold and reserve are presumed to be included in the runs with which they are now being worked.]

We have, &c.,
HUGH M. REEVES.
RICHARD PARISH.

The Hon. the Minister of Lands, Wellington, New Zealand.

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