

There are two cheese-factories in Collingwood, with sixty-nine suppliers and an output of 198 tons of cheese. A small cheese-factory was started in the Takaka district last year, and has nine suppliers with 200 cows; the output being 30 tons. This factory will double its output next year, as there is available land sufficient to run another 300 cows in the vicinity.

In the Inangahua and Grey Valleys this industry is in a fairly flourishing condition, there being now 447 cows supplying the factory at Cronadun, within eight miles of Reefton. The output was 36½ tons, exceeding last year's by 14 tons. The factory at Karamea is in a flourishing condition, and another has been erected during the year at Charleston, and one at Birchfield, also another small private factory at Kongahu. The factories in this district are supplied by 896 cows, with an output of 60½ tons of butter.

THE FLAX INDUSTRY.

Owing to the price of fibre being still very low, nothing at all is doing in this industry, and there appears to be no prospect of the mills resuming work, although several have their plant all ready to begin work should the price improve.

THE COAL INDUSTRY.

The Buller County is the most productive part of the Nelson District with regard to coal, the output for last year being 793,200 tons. This industry is increasing, and is the principal source of revenue to the whole district. It is understood that the Westport-Stockton Company have now very much improved prospects, owing to satisfactory tests made by boring operations. The coal-mines near Reefton produced nearly 800 tons more than last year, but, being so far inland, the coal is nearly all consumed locally, and down the railway-line towards Greymouth. In the northern part of Nelson the coal-mining is confined to the Collingwood district, and is in a flourishing condition. There are two mines in active operation, the North Cape and Puponga, and recently another mine has been started at Marble Creek, near Ferntown. This industry, in conjunction with the development of the Parapara Ironworks should ensure a prosperous future for this district.

THE FRUIT INDUSTRY.

This industry is assuming large proportions in the northern part of the district, and the demand for lands for apple-culture continues. The large areas cut up on the slopes facing Tasman Bay are being brought into cultivation, and by the healthy appearance of the young trees these clay lands are adapted for this purpose. In all parts of the northern district planting is proceeding steadily, and fully 1,000 acres have been planted this year. The question of a profitable export trade to the Home markets has not yet been assured, as another shipment was sent to the English market last year and was practically a failure, chiefly owing to inattention in regulating the temperature on the voyage. Further arrangements are being made for another shipment, and it is probable that ultimately, by careful packing, grading, and carriage, this export trade must prove successful.

The crop this year has been very fair, and in some places exceptionally heavy; but the inclement season, which culminated in a heavy hailstorm over parts of the district, caused a great deal of damage and loss. In addition to apples, large quantities of other fruits are grown profitably, and the crops and prices proved satisfactory. This fruit-growing area is situated within a radius of twenty-five miles of the City of Nelson, and at Motueka there are four canning and preserving factories, one at Stoke and one in Nelson: these are all working at high pressure to cope with the business.

LAND BOARD.

Meetings were held regularly every month, and a large amount of business transacted; eleven of these meetings were held at the District Office, and special meetings at Westport and Reefton. During the year Mr. Owen Lynch, who had served on the Board for twelve years, died suddenly of heart-failure, and on account of his long experience and ability his loss will be greatly felt by the Board. Mr. E. S. Hoult was appointed in his place. Mr. Robert Patterson was elected by the Crown tenants in place of Mr. A. Sinclair, who had served four years as elective member and did not seek re-election. Mr. Sinclair was a most able and energetic member, and rendered valuable service.

DEPARTMENTAL.

The office-work has been heavy during the year, and although the staff has been increased it has taken them all their time to cope with the work. The administration and clearing up of questions in connection with the education reserves has increased the work to some extent. There are now 2,541 selections, and the number of letters, telegrams, &c., received and despatched during the year was 21,800, a large increase on previous years; the number of vouchers passed through the books was 886, amounting to the sum of £20,331 16s. 9d.

A large amount of work passed through the branch of the Lands and Survey Office at Westport during the year, and owing to the advance of land-settlement in the Buller County it is very necessary to keep an officer in Westport.

The Lands and Survey Office at Reefton is now placed under the charge of the Land officer, and the officer in charge moved to New Plymouth, the work in Reefton not warranting the employment of a separate officer. The office is still kept open for the convenience of the public, and counter maps kept up to date, &c.

My labours have been made much easier by the ready co-operation of the staff, both office and field, who have always rendered me most willing assistance.

ROBT. T. SADD,
Commissioner of Crown Lands.