

additional surveyor, as with the present staff two could not be spared for the work. The tenure upon which this land will be offered has not yet been decided, but on account of the distance from a market it will probably be advisable to deal with it under the improved-farm settlements regulations, in order that special inducements may be offered in the way of assistance in bringing the land into cultivation. At present the land in the southern part of the district is occupied in large areas as cattle-runs, and the object of establishing a settlement at Bruce Bay is in the nature of an experiment, to see whether it is practicable to promote dairying, and with a view to dealing with other areas later on.

The provision in the Land Laws Amendment Act, 1913, for improvement in the tenure of pastoral runs, by giving the present licensees a right to renewal of their licenses in the event of the land not being at present required for closer settlement, is very much appreciated, and the security of tenure thus given is having the effect of inducing holders to increase their clearings.

After visiting all parts of the district and inspecting numerous mining claims at present being worked, I am forced to the conclusion that some control should be exercised over the system of working in the direction of minimizing the destruction of valuable agricultural land, especially where only small returns of gold are being obtained. The returns that could be obtained from cultivation of this land would within a limited period equal the value of gold that is being obtained, and instead of barren ground there would remain to the Dominion an asset of ever-increasing value.

There are at present in active operation seven dairy factories and one creamery, while proposals to erect new factories at Kanieri, Barrytown, and Ross are meeting with such support from the settlers in these localities as to practically ensure that factories will be established shortly. Returns for the past season show that the prices paid for butter-fat ranged from 10½d. to 1s. per pound, this latter price being paid by the Kokatahi Factory, which produced 230,720 lb. of butter from an average of 1,400 cows for the season. The estimated area required to keep one cow is from 2 acres to 4 acres, but these areas could be materially reduced by more ploughing and the application of lime, which is readily procurable in the district. The most popular breed of cows appears to be the Jersey or Ayrshire and Shorthorn cross, which seem to be best adapted to the local climatic conditions. The general opinion expressed by visitors from other parts of the Dominion with a practical knowledge of land-values is that those ruling in Westland are much lower than elsewhere for the same quality of soil, and that the district offers a very good field for investment of capital. The district is gradually gaining the respect to which it is entitled on account of its dairying and grazing possibilities, which are now being generally recognized by competent judges.

Steady progress in settlement is everywhere apparent, but this is most marked in localities where butter and cheese factories are operating. Weather-conditions during the year have been especially favourable for farming, and there has been a superabundance of feed, the surplus of which in most cases has been allowed to waste. In some few cases farmers have turned their attention to haymaking, with moderately successful results; but it is a matter for regret that generally no attempt has been made to save the surplus feed. By erecting silos at very moderate expense an abundance of winter feed might have been provided. I am confident that any expense incurred in this direction would be recouped in the first year, and on account of the uncertainty of the weather-conditions the making of ensilage should be preferred to attempting to save hay. The dry spell experienced during the burning season enabled all those making new clearings to get very successful burns, and a most satisfactory growth of grass and turnip crops has resulted. The potato-crop has again been somewhat of a failure owing to blight and wire worms, but other root crops have produced good returns. That the settlers as a whole are well satisfied with their holdings is evidenced by the fact that comparatively few properties have changed hands, although there is a marked increase in prices offering. The reports of the Crown Lands Ranger show that lessees generally are complying with the conditions of their leases. The fact that the improvements effected exceed the requirements of the conditions of the leases by some £38,600 testifies to the energy and industry of the tenants.

A sunshine-recorder which was installed in the office some two years ago shows that, notwithstanding the heavy rainfall, the district is favoured with nearly as many hours of bright sunshine during the year as other districts in which only about one-fourth of the amount of rainfall is recorded. This is accounted for by the fact that a great deal of the rainfall takes place during the night, when the moisture-laden clouds drift in from the sea, and are condensed on coming into contact with the cold strata of air in the vicinity of the Southern Alps.

It is pleasing to note that the complete tests in bulk of the timber available for wood-pulping purposes that have now been carried out by a New Zealand syndicate have proved conclusively that it is eminently suitable for the purpose, and it is anticipated that in the near future a pulp-mill will be established on the reserve adjacent to Inchbonnie Railway-station. Very material benefit will accrue to the district from the establishment of this new industry, which, in addition to producing considerable revenue, will provide employment for a large number of men.

A large volume of business has been transacted by the Land Board, and it is pleasing to note the keen interest that members, one and all, have taken in the administration of the district. This frequently involved considerable inconvenience and loss of valuable time to them, as it has been necessary for them to pay visits of inspection to certain localities in connection with the conversion of the temporary titles in which many conflicting interests had to be adjusted. The total number of leases granted by the Board under free selection during the year amount to 188, comprising an area of 26,247 acres.

No effort has been spared in the matter of dealing with ragwort and Californian thistle growing upon unoccupied Crown lands. Unfortunately, however, some private owners have been somewhat remiss in this matter, and ragwort and Californian thistle have been allowed to spread, thus depreciating the value not only of their own properties but also of adjacent lands,