

for all kinds of produce. The winter was a very mild, open one, with comparatively very little snow, this enabling stock to be kept back on what is generally deemed only summer country. The small quantity of snow—especially in Central Otago—is, however, to be deplored, as owing to the very low rainfall the country is dependent on the melting snows for irrigation and to keep up the flow of water in the streams.

A very long and severe drought has occurred in northern Otago, and heavy losses in stock and crops have resulted. Lately prospects have improved somewhat, as this part of the district has had some good showers.

Transfers.—The number of transfers brought before the Land Board was 332, of which nine were declined.

Education Endowment Reserves.—All the reserves that are of any value to a tenant are let. Those unlet are scattered areas of indifferent quality. Owing to the heavy cost of an education reserve lease, a good many small township sections and other small areas with low rentals are let on year-to-year licenses.

SOUTHLAND.

(H. D. M. HASZARD, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The season, taken as a whole, has been one of the best ever experienced here, consequently all classes of stock have done well. There has been a marked increase in the number of both sheep and cattle available for the freezers, though the export has been considerably retarded on account of the shortage of shipping. The lambing on low land averaged from 90 to 120 per cent., and on the higher country and pastoral runs the percentage was from 70 to 90 per cent., which was much better than the previous year. The season has also been an ideal one for dairying, and it is a noteworthy fact that the output of cheese from Southland exceeds that of Otago and Canterbury combined. Another item worth mentioning in connection with the dairying industry is the establishment of a sugar-of-milk factory at Edendale—the only one in the Dominion and the second on British soil. With whey from the different cheese-factories approximately £20,000 worth of sugar of milk is manufactured yearly. The grain crops are exceptionally heavy in straw, but are threshing out a little disappointingly, the average being about equal to last year. Grass has been very plentiful throughout the year, the result being that owing to drought in the central part of the South Island thousands of sheep and cattle from Canterbury and Otago have been fed here for several months. Both grass and turnips compare more than favourably with former years, which assures ample feed during the winter months.

The scarcity of labour and the increase in the cost of fencing and other material, caused by the war, have somewhat militated against the necessary improvements being effected in many cases, but in such instances the Land Board, taking the extraordinary circumstances into consideration, has afforded the settlers relief by granting them time to comply with the conditions of their leases. It is pleasing to be able to report such a satisfactory year, from which it will be easily gathered that the settlers generally are in a prosperous condition.

Lands to be opened for Selection.—The area of land to be opened for selection during the coming year should total about 20,000 acres. The surveys of part of this have been completed, whilst others are in progress and should be completed in time to have the lands on the market within the year. The sawmill has been through most of this country, which is now practically worked out. Apart from the above there will probably be two pastoral runs offered on account of subdivisions of expiring leases, and there will also be a number of expiring education endowments reoffered at auction.

Arrears of Rent.—The position is not as creditable as that of the previous year, but must, I think, be considered satisfactory, seeing that a number of new tenants on land-for-settlement sections have not yet had time to thoroughly establish themselves.

Education Endowments.—There are more lessees of education-endowment land in this district than under any other tenure, and consequently the volume of work in connection with the administration of these lands is considerable. The total number of lessees is 783, holding 339,716 acres, and paying an annual rental of £16,140. This latter amount is nearly £600 in excess of the figures for the previous year. Each year now there is a considerable number of expiries and renewals of leases to be dealt with. The tenants on the whole are a good class of settler, and all concerned have shown their appreciation of the new leases which carry the perpetual right of renewal. It has been an incentive to further improve the land, with the result that tenants are liming freely and bringing their sections up to a high state of cultivation. All are fairly prosperous, and the conditions have been well complied with.

Miscellaneous Leases and Licenses.—In the course of their inspections during the year the Rangers have as far as possible inspected and reported on miscellaneous holdings, with the result that quite a number of township sections and outlying pieces of land have been disposed of at auction, and the rentals on several holdings have been revised, with the result that the revenue from this class of license has been increased by over £100 per annum.