

APPENDICES.

APPENDIX I.—SETTLEMENT OF CROWN LANDS.

EXTRACTS FROM THE REPORTS OF THE COMMISSIONERS OF CROWN LANDS ON SETTLEMENT OPERATIONS DURING THE TWELVE MONTHS WHICH ENDED ON THE 31ST MARCH, 1919.

AUCKLAND.

(H. M. SKEET, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

Lands opened for Selection.—Exclusive of areas offered for discharged soldiers, the total area opened for disposal during the year was extremely limited, amounting to only 3,334 acres, out of which 1,969 acres were Education endowment lands, and 204 acres town and suburban lands. A considerable area of land subdivided and available for disposal was held back to meet the requirements of returning soldiers. I have repeatedly been interviewed during the year by immigrant farmers and others possessed of some capital, and obviously having the experience and energy to make successful settlers, who were anxious to obtain suitable areas of Crown land for occupation and development, and it has been a matter of keen regret to me that we should have nothing but the picked-over remnants shown in the Land Guide to offer to men obviously capable of making first-class colonists and adding materially to the wealth and development of the Dominion, and who, moreover, are anxious to have the opportunity of doing so on the very classes of land which have up to the present attracted little or no attention from the returned soldiers.

Lands selected.—The total selections during the year numbered 405, covering an area of 65,487 acres, which may be divided into the following classes:—

	Number.	Area. Acres.
Discharged soldiers	122	16,314
Freehold by cash and deferred payment, other than discharged soldiers	98	1,772
Occupation tenures other than discharged soldiers	72	13,756
Education endowments	11	2,056
Temporary tenancies	102	31,589
	405	65,487

The Freehold Tenure.—During the year 359 selections comprising 59,441 acres were alienated under freehold tenure, these consisting in the main of conversions from leasehold tenures carrying the right of freehold. In addition to these, the purchase by deferred payments of the freehold of 189 holdings, comprising 35,913 acres, was commenced during the year. This large total, which is very much in excess of the figures for the previous year, is due mainly to the expiration in November of the period within which lease-in-perpetuity holders of settlement lands could exercise their right of freehold. This caused a considerable rush of business, but, although ample warning was given by the Department, some of the settlers failed to realize their privileges until too late.

Number of Tenants, &c.—The total number of Crown tenants within the district on the 31st March, 1919, was 7,789, occupying an area of 1,916,888 acres, and paying a rental of £117,763 per annum.

The total revenue received was £214,219, which was slightly in excess of the amount for the previous year. Rebates for prompt payment of rent were granted to 6,897 tenants, the total amount of the rebates being £6,035 12s. 11d. Postponements of payment of rent in order to afford relief from circumstances of misfortune or during the early stages of occupation were granted to 121 tenants, the total amount postponed being £6,160.

Conditions and Progress of Settlement.—The progress of settlement has, as in the three preceding years, been retarded by scarcity of labour and the high cost of materials for improvements, especially fencing-wire and grass-seeds, as well as by the absence at the front of many of the occupiers, without whom development-work could not be carried on. On the limited areas of bush felled good burns were generally obtained, but grassing was not so successful. During the summer and autumn an unusually protracted spell of dry weather was experienced almost throughout the whole district, the result being that in many cases the winter has been approached with stock in poor condition, and supplies of winter feed—where provided—already severely depleted. Owing to the generally genial climate of the district the adequate provision of winter feed does not receive the attention that it should, and the effects of the dry season will therefore be more acutely felt than need have been the case if more scientific farming were practised. Progress in improvement of roading has naturally been slow, but the dry season has kept the roads, especially of the North, in better condition than would otherwise have been the case.

Owing to pressure of work on the Rangers in connection with the settlement of discharged soldiers it has not been possible to carry out the inspection of other Crown leaseholds as systematically as could be wished, but, making due allowance for conditions already referred to, the position of settlement and fulfilment of conditions by the tenants are known to be generally