

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, 1920.

NORTH AUCKLAND.

(R. P. GREVILLE, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

In submitting this, the first report on the progress of land settlement in this district, it is perhaps fitting and proper to point out that the North Auckland District was constituted on the 1st April, 1919, under the authority of section 3 of the Land Laws Amendment Act, 1914, and section 5 of the Land Laws Amendment Act, 1918.

Not since the old provincial days had there been a new land district constituted, and the work involved required considerable care, attention, and energy on the part of the officers concerned. To set up this new district under normal conditions would in itself have been a work of considerable magnitude, owing to the necessity for separating all the records and maps which had accumulated in this, the oldest district of New Zealand, since the earliest days of settlement; but to have had to do so at a time when the great rush and demand for land in connection with the settlement of returned soldiers was in full operation made the task a very difficult one. Thanks, however, to the efforts of an energetic staff, it may be said that the work has been performed in a satisfactory manner.

Much trouble was experienced in the early stages of the establishment of this office owing to the very great difficulty in obtaining officers experienced in the special work of land-administration in sufficient numbers to cope with the work, and also in consequence of the supreme difficulty of getting sufficient office accommodation for the staff. Most of these difficulties have now, however, been overcome, and the district may be regarded as being well established on a satisfactory basis.

The North Auckland District comprises all that portion of the Auckland Provincial District from the Waikato River near Mercer in the south, and extending to the North Cape. Auckland City is in the district, and is the principal Land Office. The district includes the Counties of Mangonui, Whangaroa, Hokianga, Bay of Islands, Whangarei, Hobson, Otamatea, Rodney, Waitemata, Eden, Great Barrier, Manukau, and Franklin, but does not include the Coromandel Peninsula. The district has an area of 4,478,200 acres and a population of 219,038.

One of the outstanding features of the district is the fact that it contains no barren mountain-top areas, nor any large proportion of waste lands; and, although some of the lands in the district are poor, even the poorest of them are capable of being brought into a productive state. The highest hills in the district are—Tutamoe, 2,576 ft.; Raetea, 2,463 ft.; Wekaweka, 2,431 ft.; Hauturu, 2,298 ft.; Whatoro, 2,213 ft.; Tangihua, 2,114 ft.; Tauwhare, 2,069 ft.; Maungataniwha, 1,918 ft.; while the average elevation of the whole district would probably not exceed 500 ft. above sea-level. It is a well-known fact, however, that some of the higher lands are the most fertile. The only really barren lands at the present time are the sand-dune areas, which are situated principally on the west coast north and south of the Kaipara Heads, and in the Northern Peninsula, in Mangonui County; but even these areas could all be reclaimed and brought into a productive state by proper treatment.

The district contains large areas of rich flat lands, notably the extensive flats in the main Wairoa Valley, including the Raupo, Ruawai, Naumai, Tokatoka, and Horahora Flats; the fine extensive flats on the western side of the Wairoa; the Kaihu Valley Flats; the flats in the Awakino and Tangowahine Valleys, and other tributaries of the great Wairoa River. These mentioned lie all in the Dargaville district; but there are also the extensive areas surrounding and including the Hikurangi Swamp, comprising 50,000 acres of first-class land. Then, in the far north, in the Mangonui County, there are the rich and extensive Kaitia Swamp lands, and farther north, to the south of Hohoua, the well-known Motutangi Swamp, at present in an undeveloped state.

In addition to the flat lands there are large areas of good grazing-country. These were originally bush lands, and have been brought into cultivation. Considerable areas of these lands are capable of carrying from a sheep and a half to two sheep to the acre, and this after having been felled and grassed for many years.

In several portions of the district there are areas of volcanic land. These are situated in the Bay of Islands, Whangarei, and Otamatea Counties, and in the country in the immediate vicinity of Auckland City.

In addition to the lands in profitable occupation there are large areas of undeveloped land, and also the lands comprised in the kauri-gum reserves. The poorer undeveloped lands can all be successfully brought under cultivation. All that is necessary is the judicious expenditure of from £7 to £10 per acre in the improvement of them. Under the homestead section of the Land Laws Amendment Act, 1919, these lands may be successfully dealt with. Several blocks are now being prepared ready for offering under the new system.