

state of the stock and wool markets. Those settlers who have engaged exclusively in sheep-farming have suffered a severe setback. Practically no wool has been sent from the district, owing to the low price offering, which would hardly cover cost of cartage and handling. Most of last year's clip is therefore still in the sheds. Settlers who are firmly established are doing fairly well, but have not brought extensive areas into profit, owing to the large cost of material, labour, and grass-seed. Dry-weather conditions prevailed into the late autumn, enabling a few settlers in the bush districts to secure good burns, and in some cases to clear up previous unsuccessful ones. In most cases the soldier settlers, though somewhat discouraged by the depressed state of the stock-market, are showing a good spirit and endeavouring to make the best of the situation. A number have been obliged to apply for concessions.

The general conditions in this district, which has felt the financial depression in common with the rest of the Dominion, are perhaps not quite as acute as in other parts where land-values had reached a higher level. With the cessation of demands for properties the values fell a little. Stock responded more in accord with values throughout the country. Farm-produce was in a better position, though some oat crops were poor. Dairy factories report good business, and considerable expansion took place in west coast districts, grass being plentiful as a result of good rains. The weather conditions were mostly dry right into the late autumn. The apple industry is more encouraging owing to better shipping facilities, and since the close of the financial year the sales in London have been very satisfactory. Satisfactory business is reported in the extensive and up-to-date local fruit-preserving and jam factory. Hop-growers have also realized good prices. The general farming community have felt the scarcity of money in many ways, and even long-standing settlers otherwise in a comfortable position have found a temporary difficulty in meeting their obligations. Even a slight rise in the price of wool, which may reasonably be anticipated, will relieve the immediate difficulties with which many of the settlers are faced. Generally speaking, and having regard to the unusual conditions, the progress made may be regarded as satisfactory.

Land opened for Selection.—There is little to report under this heading. Practically all the lands opened were specially set aside for selection by discharged soldiers only, and the demand has been somewhat disappointing, partly due to the slump and its effect on business generally, which has checked applications, though many inquiries had previously been made by genuine land-seekers. It will be necessary to consider the question of making these areas available for general application. Selections continued to be made under the regulations for the occupation of pastoral areas in the Westland and Karamea Mining Districts, but these applications are not so numerous as heretofore. A considerable number of forfeited or surrendered sections and some new blocks will be opened for application in the coming winter months. These should attract some new settlers into the district.

Freeholds.—Most of the Nelson Land District is situated in the Westland and Karamea Mining Districts, and a large area is also national-endowment land. The majority of the settlers are therefore unable to acquire the freehold of their farms. Most of those who can acquire the freehold of the lands comprised in their leases refrain from doing so. They are either satisfied with the conditions of their leases or are unable to purchase owing to the financial stringency. Few freeholds have, therefore, been acquired during the year under review.

Land Board Work.—In addition to the ordinary monthly meetings of the Land Board several special meetings were held at the Principal Land Office to cope with the extra work arising out of the settlement of discharged soldiers, and the meetings usually held in Murchison, Westport, and Reefton, were abandoned. Owing to the depressed state of the markets applications from discharged-soldier settlers and others for concessions were numerous, especially in the closing months of the year. Each of these applications was dealt with sympathetically on its merits after careful investigation. The policy of the Board is to help the man who is making an honest effort to achieve success.

Revenue and Arrears totalling £95,000.—The revenue for the year shows a considerable increase over that of last year, due to a large extent by repayments of advances made to discharged soldiers. The ordinary revenue, though estimated to be £31,000, was actually £39,000, which is an increase over last year's receipts of £5,000. Receipts from discharged soldiers' advances totalled £55,500, an excess over estimates of £30,000, and in excess of last year's receipts of £40,000. Total arrears are approximately £10,000, made up as follows: Ordinary revenue, £5,000; and discharged soldiers, £5,000. The arrears in ordinary revenue are due to the depression in the wool and stock markets. The same applies to the discharged soldiers; and while a considerable portion of the arrears have since been accounted for by payment or postponements, there is every reason to believe that all will be collected and accounted for.

Land remaining for Future Selection.—Most of the unoccupied land in the district has now been made provisional State forest. The land so dealt with consists of high and remotely situated areas, but some areas were included that were only unsuited for settlement on account of their inaccessibility and limited extent. The principal difficulty in dealing with the remaining lands in the district is how to provide road access. Generally speaking settlers will not take up land if they cannot obtain means of access, and in this district the remaining Crown areas are of such low value that they will not provide sufficient security for the moneys necessary to build access roads. Action is being taken with a view to opening for selection during the ensuing year the most accessible and easily roaded blocks.

WESTLAND.

(R. S. GALBRAITH, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

During the past year the seasons in Westland were exceptionally favourable for farming operations; crops of all kinds did well, and the unusual amount of continuously dry weather experienced in the summer and autumn enabled oats, hay, &c., to be saved for winter use. Good burns were