

The prices received for wool should go far towards clearing off the liabilities incurred by sheep-farmers during 1921 and 1922. Some of the Crown tenants who had got behind with their payments have been able to reduce their arrears, but there is room for much improvement in this respect. Last winter a large number of fat cattle were exported from Wellington to Australia, and this brought about an improvement in the value of beef-cattle. This, however, was only temporary, and prices have again receded.

Dairy-farmers have had a fair season. With the markets fluctuating as they have been doing during the year it is difficult to say what the returns for the year will be. A substantial bonus at the end of the season is usually forthcoming, but indications point to this year's bonus being much smaller than usual. Increased returns from dairying must be sought along the lines of improvement in pastures and a higher standard in the quality of the milking-herds, but progress in these directions is very slow, largely through want of capital. The annual loss due to cows failing to come to profit is very heavy, and although neglect is often a contributing cause we find many of the most progressive and capable farmers among the unfortunate losers.

The difficulty experienced in securing financial accommodation and the present high cost of effecting improvements are delaying progress. Very little bushfelling is being undertaken, and this is likely to continue until easier conditions prevail. In portions of the district fern and second growth are causing much anxiety.

I deeply regret having to record the death of Mr. Joseph Dawson, who had been a member of the Wellington Land Board for the past twenty years. The deceased gentleman was a pioneer settler of sterling character, and his knowledge and experience of settlement conditions were highly valued by his fellow-members. The vacancy caused by the death of Mr. Dawson has been filled by the appointment of Mr. Alexander Stuart, of Marton. Mr. Stuart did valuable work as Chairman of the Advisory Board appointed to report on the conditions of soldier settlement in the Wellington Land District, and he takes a keen interest in all matters affecting the welfare of the farmers. His appointment has given very great satisfaction.

#### NELSON.

(N. C. KENSINGTON, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

Quite a number of new selections were made during the year, the number of holdings taken up on permanent tenures being forty, and the area selected totalling approximately 9,800 acres. The general outlook has been much brighter, chiefly on account of the good prices obtained for all classes of wool, and the satisfactory prices for butterfat. With every prospect of good wool-prices holding, it may reasonably be expected that unimproved Crown land will receive more attention. In this connection it is hoped to open for selection some 10,000 acres of good limestone country at the south-western end of the district. This land is handy to the Westport-Greymouth coastal road now under construction. The past season has been an exceptionally good one from a pasture point of view, and most farmers are facing the winter with excellent prospects.

*Statutory Inspection of Leaseholds.*—A large number of inspections have been made by Crown Lands Rangers, which included a number of ordinary inspections of Crown leases. These showed in nearly all cases that the improvements effected were well in excess of requirements.

*Dairying Industry.*—The past year's operations has shown an increase in factory returns. The dairying industry is considerably increasing in the central and western parts of the province. In the Maruia district great headway is being made, and with the establishment of a butter-factory at Station Creek and the selection of available settlement land a large butter-output should result.

*Fruit Industry.*—With the present Government guarantee the fruit industry is on a sounder basis. Those who have managed to keep their orchards in good order are at the present time able to successfully carry on. Unfortunately, many could not stand the heavy expense of spraying, and the necessary cultivation, consequently in many cases the orchards were cut out. It is difficult to judge what the actual position of the fruit industry will be in the future, as so much depends on the condition of shipments arriving in England.

*Timber Industry.*—This shows an improvement since last year. The principal sawmills are operating on the west coast of the district, with several small mills operating in the Collingwood, Takaka, and Waimea Counties. There are large areas of Crown lands in the Karamea district carrying good timber, but the uncertainty of water carriage appears to affect the establishment of large mills. The timber from these lands forms an invaluable asset towards the cost of future road-making, which is a necessity when opening these lands for settlement. It is hoped when the timber is disposed of that a considerable sum will be set aside for this purpose, as these lands when opened for settlement will not stand the heavy loading necessary to form suitable roads.

*Westport Colliery Reserves.*—During the year a number of sections in the Town of Westport have been taken up on permanent tenures. There are still a number of vacant sections in the town, and these will be offered when conditions are favourable.

*Education Endowments.*—Several new selections of education reserves were made during the year. Many holders of education leases of rural lands on expiry have accepted a renewal based on 5 per cent. of the unimproved value of the land. Expiring lessees of education reserves in the Town of Westport have received a renewal fixed by arbitration.

*Tarakohe Cement-works.*—These works, commonly known as "Golden Bay," were closed for a considerable time, but resumed operations during the year, and are now working steadily.