

Paremata Settlement (Tolaga Bay).—All the settlers on this settlement are doing well, and it is looked upon as being the most satisfactory purchase in the district. The dairying returns are very good. One or two small problems require solving, but as a whole the settlers have every reason to congratulate themselves on their good fortune. The amount of arrears on this settlement is greater than it should be.

Hurakia Block (Waiapu).—The settlers on this block are men of the right type—optimistic, hardworking, and good farmers. They have put in a great amount of hard personal labour, particularly in the matter of fencing. The access is bad at the present time, but a large sum is being spent on improving it. Some slight readjustments may be necessary in the matter of boundaries, and some of the homestead-sites are not very good. The fact that settlers have been granted exemption from rent for two years will enable them to get a good start. Given even a fair chance, they must do well.

Hikutaia Settlement (Opotiki).—A very good settlement. Handy to Opotiki and to the necessary factories, &c., it must progress. One or two of the settlers are not of the right type to succeed, but as a whole the men are doing well. Here again the rents are further in arrear than they should be. Dairying has been very successfully carried on. Two sections were retained at the ballot on account of the fencing and firewood thereon, and they have proved a boon to the settlers. Probably these two sections will be leased early next year. Some of the holdings would appear to be on the small side.

HAWKE'S BAY.

(J. D. THOMSON, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

No sections have been offered for selection by discharged soldiers during the past twelve months, and very little alteration has taken place in the general situation of discharged soldier settlement. The settlers are gradually overtaking the setback of the slump, and in many cases are forging ahead and establishing their position securely.

The event of the year has been the setting-up of District Revaluation Committees and a Dominion Revaluation Board, and the inquiries being made into the position of soldier settlers should have a very beneficial effect. There is always the man who will sit and wait for assistance to come along, and this district has also harboured a few who are out for what they can get, with no intentions of meeting their liabilities. But in the main there is nothing but credit and sympathy due to the soldier settler and his wife, who have had in many cases a very stiff fight against the adverse conditions that hit them almost as soon as they had got on to their holdings. The Revaluation Board will, no doubt, ease the position to a great extent so far as a soldier's position with this Department is concerned.

There have been a few cases of soldier settlers abandoning their holdings, and in one or two isolated instances private mortgagees have exercised their powers of sale.

The settlements are generally in a satisfactory position. There are isolated soldiers on some settlements who are not showing evidence of any great progress, and one or two settlements are not flourishing too well. With stock and produce at present-day prices it will not be difficult to decide whether the trouble is in the land or the settler.

TARANAKI.

(J. COOK, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The past year has not seen any great change in the condition of soldier settlements. Prices for produce have been well maintained, and the receipts from milk orders, &c., show a slight increase, although there is a falling-off in the amount of instalments on farm mortgages. This, however, is compensated for by the increase in the repayments on Current Account. The decisions of the Dominion Board are being awaited with interest, and many selectors will be able to rearrange their finances and make a fresh start.

The total receipts during the year for credit of the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Account were £172,746, an increase of £9,046, the main items being as follows: Instalments and repayment on farms, £21,800; instalments and repayments on houses, £29,746; interest and repayment on Current Account, £99,868. The advances paid out amounted to £113,500, the principal items being—Farms, £2,247; houses, £13,513; Current Account, £87,592. The total advances outstanding on the 31st March were—On farms, £863,376; on houses, £363,580; on Current Account, £322,410. The total advances made since the inception of the soldier-settlement scheme in this district total £2,154,255.

WELLINGTON.

(T. BROOK, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The demand for land by discharged soldiers has greatly decreased during the year, so much so that in order to dispose of farms which have fallen back into the hands of the Department it has been found necessary to remove the restrictions imposed by the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act and open the land for general competition. For various reasons a number of farm properties have had to be realized through the Supreme Court, and of these a fair proportion have been reselected, mostly by civilians. All properties which have fallen back into the hands of the Department are being revalued by the District Revaluation Committees, and it is hoped that little trouble will be found in disposing of same on the basis of their valuation. A considerable amount of illegal dealing in stock under security to the Crown has come under notice during the year, and in a number of cases prosecutions and convictions have followed. It is hoped that the resulting publicity will have a beneficial effect.