

## APPENDIX.

### REPORTS OF COMMISSIONERS OF CROWN LANDS.

#### NORTH AUCKLAND.

(H. J. LOWE, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The principal feature of the year's operation was the revaluation effected under the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Amendment Act, 1923. The district was overhauled by two Revaluation Committees, and the determinations of the Dominion Board have been given effect to. This has tended largely to still the feeling of unrest which was so evident last year.

The Act being largely a repatriation measure, it necessarily followed that there would be a certain number of failures. The revaluation has adjusted matters in such a manner as to enable the average soldier to make a satisfactory living; and although, as already stated, it is expected a certain number of failures will still result, this will be due more to incompetence than to the measure of relief afforded.

I have personally visited the whole of my district, and I consider it is safe to assume that from now on those who abandon their farms would be better following other pursuits.

The nature of the whole of this district is such that liberal top-dressings must be given annually in order to maintain the maximum benefit from the pasture. This is an expenditure which should, except in very special cases of hardship, come out of the income of the farm, and it is now being realized by the soldiers, and provision along these lines is being made.

*Applications under the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act.*—Restrictions in connection with the purchase of houses and farms still continue; consequently applications under these heads have been small, the principal work under the Act being for assistance to those who are already settled. The total number of applications received was 1,220. Of these, 1,103 were recommended for approval, as follows: Purchase of farms, 6; transfer of farms, 40; postponements, 389; erection of houses, 20; purchase of houses, 2; transfer of houses, 263; advances on Current Account, 383. The total amount recommended on Current Account was £37,692.

The number of freehold farms abandoned to date is 143, of an area of 25,740 acres. Sixty-seven of these farms have been disposed of, comprising 7,427 acres, realizing £120,581. The farms on hand number seventy-six, of an area of 18,312 acres.

The total number of dwellings and sections abandoned to date is fifty-four. Of these, forty-three have been disposed of at satisfactory prices. Of the remaining eleven, two are building sections and nine are houses, the latter being let on temporary tenancies at a rental sufficient to cover interest, depreciation, and all other charges. The demand for houses in the City of Auckland remains steady, and no difficulty has been experienced in realizing properties situated in Auckland. Of the nine houses referred to, eight are situated in the country districts. Out of a capital of nearly two and a half millions advanced on house property, the amount authorized to be written off to date is £74 3s. 9d.

The revaluation of soldiers' farms in this district resulted in a reduction of capital of £144,733 on an invested capital of £2,932,715. The rent, interest, and instalments written off amounted to £25,122; remissions granted, £12,325. Postponements under all headings amounted to £90,900.

#### AUCKLAND.

(W. F. MARSH, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

*General.*—The majority of the soldier farmers in the district are engaged in dairying, and have benefited by the extremely favourable nature of the season for that branch of farming. There has been a noticeable and satisfactory improvement of dairy herds, and a gradual elimination of many of the useless animals which no farmer, and least of all a discharged soldier, can afford to keep. The practical completion of the work of revaluation has removed the feeling of uncertainty that prevailed in the preceding year, and has shown the settlers that the State was prepared to deal fairly, and even generously, with all cases, so as to give them the fullest possible opportunity of making good. From interviews with many of the settlers it is quite apparent that the majority of them are well satisfied with their treatment, and will now be able to put their best efforts into making their holdings pay and meeting their future obligations. There is, of course, a small but fortunately negligible minority who consider that what they have not accomplished should entitle them to further concessions. Settlers of this type would, however, hardly make a success under any conditions, and in their own interests, as well as those of the State, should be encouraged, if not judiciously urged, to apply their efforts in other directions. When the adjustment of Current Account advances, which is now being undertaken, has been completed, settlers should be required to gradually make such payments as will clear off their indebtedness on stock and chattels, thus giving them greater freedom in the ordinary working of the farm and its movable accessories.

*Lands selected and held.*—The demand for land by soldiers, as among civilians, is extremely limited, and practically exists only either among the few who intentionally—and wisely—refrained from taking up land at maximum prices, or who, having been compelled to abandon privately acquired properties,