

TARANAKI.

(J. Cook, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The past season has, generally speaking, been a fairly good one for soldier settlers, who, in common with others, have participated in the good prices prevailing for wool and sheep, while the pay-out for butterfat has also been satisfactory.

The benefits of revaluation are now beginning to be felt, and most of the settlers concerned are quite satisfied with the concessions granted, which have given them a feeling of greater security, and many whose success previously was problematical are now settling down to the work of improving their holdings. Of course, there are still a number of cases where ultimate success is impossible, or at least doubtful, either from lack of experience, interest, or finance, and these will have to be gradually eliminated to make way for others.

A large number of properties which have been abandoned from time to time have been revalued by the District Revaluation Committee and made available for resale at reasonable prices. The disposal of these properties has been the cause of considerable anxiety; but during the past year the demand has much improved, and quite a number have been disposed of at prices which should enable the purchaser to make headway. There are still a number of properties on hand, some of which will be difficult to quit. Any fair grazing-country, however, is eagerly sought after, no doubt as a result of the good prices of wool and sheep last season. A few abandoned house properties still remain for disposal, principally in smaller townships; but a ready sale can be expected for most house properties coming back on our hands.

Practically no land has been opened for soldier settlement during the year; indeed, there now appears to be very little demand by soldiers when any land is made available. Selections by soldiers during the year number five, with an area of 596 acres. Since the inception of the Act the total area of Crown and settlement land taken up and still held by soldiers is 122,737 acres, the number of settlers being 369.

Advances to purchase farms have been made to 565 settlers, while 545 men have received assistance to purchase or erect dwellings. The total amount outstanding on mortgage under all headings is now £1,380,921, which amount includes also advances on Current Account.

The total revenue received during the year was £178,344, while advances paid out amount to £93,161. Arrears of interest and instalments are still heavy, but by the time the Dominion Board's determinations are all given effect to the position will be eased, although there are many cases where arrears have accrued since the 30th June, 1923, where it will probably be necessary to give further postponements, as there are a number of settlers whose position from now on should be assured, but who cannot be expected to pick up any arrears for some time to come.

Regarding house properties, mortgagors generally meet payments promptly and obtain advantage of rebates, but there is a certain proportion of mortgagors frequently in arrear. However, in most of these cases the fact can generally be attributed to either unemployment or ill health.

In conclusion, it may be said that the position with regard to soldier settlement is a good deal brighter at the present than it has been since the slump commenced, and with the completion of the investigation of Current Accounts now being put in hand the chief troubles of soldier settlers should be disposed of. Thereafter in the majority of cases the settlers should be able to carry on by their own efforts without much further financial assistance from the Crown.

WELLINGTON.

(T. Brook, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

In order to secure lessees or purchasers for the farm-lands available for disposal it has been found advisable to open them to general application. Properties which have come back into the hands of the Department are being dealt with on the basis of the revalued prices, and in most cases no great difficulty is being experienced in allotting them to suitable applicants. Where it is considered that adjoining soldier settlers have holdings the area of which has proved to be insufficient, or where the particular property under review has likewise proved to be insufficient, it has been the practice to subdivide and allot the property to the adjoining settlers, with beneficial results. The District Revaluation Committees practically completed their duties during the year, and most settlers have now received the result of the Dominion Board's findings. The decisions have given general satisfaction, and now that the land-values are more in keeping with present-day ruling prices, and taking into consideration the existing market prices for sheep, fat stock, and stores, a much better position in the settlers' accounts should be disclosed at the end of the coming year.

The receipts for the year amounted to £325,452, which sum is an increase of £34,127 upon last year's figures.

The amount of loans and advances outstanding at the end of the year was—

	£
Instalment mortgages on farms	1,096,581
Instalment mortgages on dwellings	1,479,783
Current Account advances	592,917
Miscellaneous accounts	213,407
Total	£3,382,688

NELSON.

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

The Revaluation Committees completed their work during the year, and the subsequent determinations from the Dominion Board have now been given effect to. The results have been generally regarded as generous, and soldier settlers now know their position; and those who earnestly desire to make a success of farming have received encouragement to do so. In most cases soldier settlers