

APPENDICES.

APPENDIX I.—SETTLEMENT OF CROWN LANDS.

EXTRACTS FROM THE REPORTS OF THE COMMISSIONERS OF CROWN LANDS.

NORTH AUCKLAND.

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

Conditions and Progress of Settlement.—Except in the far North, the past season has been rather unsatisfactory and production below the average. On the whole the weather has been abnormal, with cold westerly winds and very little rain. This retarded growth, and consequently dairy products are below last season. In the Northern Wairoa, where paspalum pastures predominate, the output will probably be up to par. The general outlook for the winter is not good—hay crops are light and root crops are poor. The value of top-dressing has been forcibly demonstrated this season, the contrast between the treated and untreated pasture being very marked. No further advance has been made in the matter of cultivating root and forage crops for summer and winter use, which has a very marked effect upon the season's output, and too much stress cannot be laid on this important branch of the industry. Too much reliance has been placed on the ordinary pasture, and this, together with lack of top-dressing, failure of root crops, and abnormal weather, has been a severe set-back to many settlers. No doubt the lack of cultivation is due to economic conditions, but it happens that farmers generally do not appreciate the benefit that would be derived from the increased expenditure, which would not only result in larger output, but would prove of lasting benefit to the soil. The spread of noxious weeds is attributable to the failure of the farmer in this respect.

Although disease among dairy herds which last year had become alarming is still prevalent it is not on the increase, and reports from my field officers tend to show that it is being controlled.

Herd-testing is now recognized to be indispensable, and I am pleased to report that nearly all dairy factories employ a herd-tester, consequently an increased production per cow has resulted.

It is noticeable the number of pedigree herds that have been established recently in this district.

Sheep-farmers have experienced a disappointing year; wool-prices, although fair, were below expectations. There has been a steady decline since all classes of sheep reached peak prices in February, 1925. The fleeces were considerably lighter on account of the severe weather experienced in winter and spring. Sheep were particularly free from disease this season consequent on the dry spell experienced.

Prices of butterfat have remained similar to last season.

The output of butter and cheese was much lower than last year, the quantities being 12,840 tons of butter and 588 tons of cheese.

Land Board Work.—During the year the Land Board held twelve meetings, occupying twenty-seven days. The total number of items on the order paper amounted to 2,006, of which 1,048 were in connection with ordinary Crown lands business and 958 affecting administration under the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act. Mr. Dargaville's term as Crown tenants' representative expired on the 24th May, and he was opposed by Mr. W. T. Hunt, Ruawai, who was duly elected. The thanks of the Board are due to Mr. Dargaville for the interest he displayed during his term.

Lands offered and selected.—The demand for unimproved rural lands during the year has been slack, but small holdings of from 5 to 25 acres near the city, both improved and unimproved, have been much sought after.

A total area of 21,921 acres was offered during the year for sale or selection on permanent tenures, while the area selected under these tenures was only 12,775 acres, taken up by 225 applicants.

Of the holdings offered, seventy-nine were rural properties of an average area of 350 acres, while twenty-seven were small holdings of an average area of 20 acres. Nineteen of these small holdings were situated within easy reach of the city by bus or train, and are eminently suited for market-gardening, &c. As already stated, competition for this type of land was very keen, and it is noticeable that for the most part the applicants were persons who had arrived from England in the last two or three years.

Fifty-eight building sections in and around the city were offered at auction, thirty-three settlement sections being offered for sale for cash or deferred payment, and the remaining twenty-five, being part of the education endowment, were offered on lease. Competition was keen, all the leaseholds being disposed of and twelve of the settlement sections sold on the deferred-payment system. It is evident that the public are coming to the opinion that it is wiser to lease the home site instead of purchasing, and thus conserve their capital for the erection of the dwelling.

Freeholds.—During the year fifty-four holdings of a total area of 5,210 acres were freeholded, the greater number of these being by conversion from deferred payment and occupation-with-right-of-purchase licenses. In the case of the latter tenure this naturally arises principally from the expiration of the license. Although the total area freeholded this year about equals last year's figures, an indication of the existing financial condition may be found in the fact that the number of purchases is only fifty-four, as against sixty-six last year.