

licenses that still had nine or ten years to run. The total amount of revenue received was £110,164, as compared with £127,331 last year. The falling-off is largely accounted for by the considerable amount of arrears included in last year's totals.

Board Work.—The Land Board held twelve meetings during the year. It was generally found possible to get through the business in one day. Several difficult problems confronted the Board, and I must once again express appreciation of the earnest and capable manner in which the Board members applied themselves to their duty. The district is fortunate in the gentlemen selected to act on the Board. Mr. G. O. Donovan was again elected as Crown tenants' representative. It is with very much regret that I have to record the death of Mr. A. J. Cameron, who had been a member of the Board since its inception, and had previously been for ten years a member of the Hawke's Bay Board. Mr. Cameron at all times showed a most praiseworthy sense of his duty to the Crown on the one hand and the tenants on the other, and his wise guidance and kindly counsels were invaluable. I wish to again place on record appreciation of the cordial relationships existing between the office and the legal firms in the district, and of the courtesy at all times extended by the Press.

Deteriorated Lands.—As recorded above, many of the settlers in the Opotiki County have experienced difficulty in carrying on. The Land Board, however, has given them consideration in view of the fact that the Deteriorated Lands Committee appointed under the Act of last session will shortly be functioning. Rents, for instance, have not been pressed for, although the Board has insisted upon the interest being paid, and could also reasonably have asked the tenants to pay at least a proportion of their rent. The problem of these lands is a difficult one, and, although the Committee will probably be able to place some settlers on such a footing that they will have a reasonable chance of success, there are, I am afraid, some cases in which no amount of assistance will avail.

Lands remaining for Selection.—The lands which should be opened for selection during the ensuing year include the following blocks: Tuparoa Consolidation (6,000 acres); Poroporo (4,380 acres); Tahora (2,290 acres); Section 1, Block XXI, Mangahopai (4,780 acres); Waipaoa 5A (1,000 acres). About half of this country is in heavy bush, some of it being amongst the best of the bushland left in the district. Except in the case of the Tuparoa Consolidation the prices will be low.

The total area to be opened next year is approximately 19,080 acres. In addition to this area 9,800 acres are at present open for selection.

Amongst the blocks that will be available for disposal subsequent to 1925 are Oamaru 1c (4,810 acres), Tangihanga (4,460 acres), and Tahora (21,710 acres). There is also in the Urewera and Opotiki districts a large area of unoccupied Crown lands, but this will probably be set aside as forest reserve.

Special Report on Drought Conditions.—The long spell of dry weather and the consequent scarcity of feed, continuing as it has right to the commencement of the winter months, giving no hope of recovery until the end of September, is a presage of a period of anxiety and stress for the majority of the pastoralists in Poverty Bay.

Right through the district the position is the same—from Wairoa to the Waiapu. In no part of the district is the position more acute than from the Poverty Bay flats to Tokomaru Bay. The noticeable feature of the whole question in regard to the dairymen is that it is only those men who have made adequate provision for the winter in the way of supplementary fodder who are weathering the storm.

The bad season being experienced by the majority of the dairy-farmers in Poverty Bay is causing them to give greater consideration to the question of supplementary feed.

About the Poverty Bay flats the settlers who have had supplementary feed have not dropped much in the way of butterfat up to the 31st March, but their cows will have to be dried off early, and their loss is going to be from March to July.

The settlers without lucerne and other supplementary feed have dropped between 25 and 30 per cent. in butterfat (up to 31st March), besides the loss they will have to face in the way of stock, which is going to be very heavy, and practically all their cows are dry.

The prices paid by the two dairy factories operating in the Poverty Bay districts are the same as last season—viz., 1s. 4d. per pound, but as practically none of the export butter has been sold it is very hard to say what the price will average for the whole season.

The weather has been abnormally dry within the Opotiki district this season, with the result that the feed is not so plentiful or so nutritious as usual for dairy cows. Still, the settlers have done very well, and the Opotiki Dairy Company has paid out 1s. 3d. per pound so far, and fully expects to pay the same as last season—viz., 1s. 7d. for the season.

HAWKE'S BAY.

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

Though climatic conditions in the fall of the year and early part of the winter were quite seasonable, the spring, summer, and autumn conditions were the worst on record for many a year, consequently sheep and dairy farmers have experienced a trying time, and will, unfortunately, be hard-pushed to carry over their stock till the following spring.

The sheep-farmer has had to content himself with a lighter weight and lower price in wool, coupled with a reduced price in fat stock, though it is not correct to assume that his returns in any way touched slump or famine prices. The average returns for wool and stock may be more accurately described as slightly under normal.