

The extermination of the rabbit on the better-class land must be taken in hand systematically. The formation of a Rabbit Board on the east coast of this district is a step in the right direction.

*The Control of Fires on the Tussock and Native Grasses of our High Country.*—The firing of this class of country, combined with the rabbit pest, is in a great measure responsible for the reduced flocks.

*Better Communication with Outside Markets.*—This is gradually coming about, inasmuch as we have the improved connection with the North Island by way of the “Tamahine,” though freights are still high. The work of bridging the Wairau River on the West Coast Road is in hand, and this coming year should see the opening-up of this route. A survey of the route of the South Island Main Trunk Railway is in progress, and when completed should decide the question of better communication in this direction.

*Land Board.*—The Land Board held fourteen meetings during the year, and dealt with 347 cases, besides a lot of miscellaneous work.

*Revenue.*—The revenue for the year shows a decided increase from the previous year, a gross amount of £92,738 having been collected, including £35,937 under the Discharged Soldiers’ Settlement Account. This shows an increase of £9,295 over last year.

## WESTLAND.

(W. T. MORPETH, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

*Conditions and Progress of Settlement.*—Weather conditions in Westland have been very unfavourable to farming operations for the year ending 31st March, 1926. There has been practically no summer, and the incessant rain has had such a bad effect on the pasture that butterfat returns have been much reduced, and dairy-farmers in some parts of the district are drying off their herds much earlier than usual. It has been difficult to save the hay, and white and green crops have not been as successful as usual. The rainfall for Hokitika was 131·64 in., and there were 1,908 hours of sunshine in the year.

*Lime-works.*—The works at Kowitirangi and Ross are still carrying on, and the farming community is realizing more and more the great importance of lime and top-dressing. At the Ross Lime-works the price of the burnt lime is 45s. a ton, and of the carbonate 25s. a ton on trucks at Ross Railway-station, sacks extra. The cartage to Wataroa from the works is £3 a ton, and to Harihari 30s. a ton by way of back loading, and both classes of lime are 5s. a ton less at the kiln. A mixture recommended by the company is half a ton of burnt lime and half a ton of carbonate to the acre.

*Timber.*—The sawn timber which passed through Otira Tunnel for the year amounted to 34,346,000 superficial feet, a decrease of 687,941 ft. on last year. The output also included 239,148 silver-pine posts, poles, sleepers, &c., and 165,450 birch posts and sleepers.

The gross timber return for the year is 73,452,000 superficial feet, an increase of 315,000 ft. on last year’s return, and a record for any one year. Of this total 18,732,700 ft. was taken from freehold, 38,364,060 ft. from Crown land, and 16,355,240 ft. from State forest.

The timber exported beyond New Zealand was 21,315,800 superficial feet, comprising 17,764,396 ft. of white-pine, 3,473,204 ft. of rimu, and 78,200 ft. of birch. The gross export was 180,142 ft. less than last year.

*Deteriorated Lands.*—The Deteriorated Lands Act, 1925, provides for assistance to the occupiers of lands in certain localities in the North Island where the ordinary operations for bringing bush lands into profit have, from somewhat obscure causes, been partially or wholly neutralized. Something of the same kind has occurred in this district, but, fortunately, not to any serious extent. A matter, however, that should receive more attention is the condition of the pastures. A considerable proportion of the pasture area in this district is very far indeed from the peak of its productive capacity, and the question of extending the scope of the Deteriorated Lands Act to assist in this direction is well worth consideration. Bearing in mind the special areas to which the provisions of the Act were expressly designed to apply, it must be admitted that the renewal of worn-out pastures is beyond the measure’s legitimate scope. It is, however, a definite step in that direction, and there can be little doubt that State advances for the purchase of lime and fertilizers, duly safeguarded, would be a payable proposition on both sides, provided, of course, the necessary transport facilities are available and satisfactory.

*Flax.*—There are three flax-mills operating in this district. The industry is capable of further development. Large areas of river frontage, held on temporary tenures by adjoining owners, could in many cases be more profitably occupied by the cultivation of this valuable fibre.

*Revenue and Arrears.*—The total gross revenue for the year (including Discharged Soldiers Settlement Account) amounted to £34,930. The rent-roll amounted to £8,797, and arrears of rent £1,305, an improvement of £391 on last year’s figures.

*Land Board.*—Twelve monthly meetings were held, as scheduled, during the year, occupying one full day each. The Board dealt with 117 applications for land, 123 transfers, 35 exchanges, and 67 applications by returned men for advances, transfers, postponements, &c., together with the usual volume of miscellaneous work.

*Land open for Selection.*—An area of 4,873 acres was opened for selection by ballot during the year. Areas selected under various permanent tenures amounted to 14,698 acres.

*Land remaining for Selection.*—An area of 2,500 acres is now on hand, representing outstanding applications and various areas under survey to be offered for selection by ballot.