

APPENDICES.

APPENDIX I.—SETTLEMENT OF CROWN LANDS.

EXTRACTS FROM THE REPORTS OF THE COMMISSIONERS OF CROWN LANDS.

NORTH AUCKLAND.

(O. N. CAMPBELL, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

Conditions and Progress of Settlement.—The season has been a splendid one from the farmers' point of view. The rains, though somewhat excessive, were fortunately accompanied by fairly warm weather, causing a wonderful growth of feed. The new season opened with good production from the start, but in the swamp lands, where *paspalum* predominates, the growth was late and there was a consequent shortage of feed in early spring, thus reducing the output of butterfat to a certain extent during the spring period. In December and January very wet mild weather prevailed, which, though causing a good growth of grass, made haymaking a risky undertaking, and a large percentage of the hay crop was a total loss. Later on in the season, however, as *paspalum* pastures came away, good crops of hay were obtained.

The output of dairy-produce in this district has been very satisfactory, and shows substantial increase over last season; but there is a general uncertainty about results. Conditions over which the dairy-farmer has no control have had a decidedly serious effect on the market, and the advance payments were very much below those of last season. Except in the case of old-established farmers, very few are in a sound financial position, and many are unable to meet their financial obligations.

Sheep and wool: The lambing season has been good, the percentage of lambs being above the average and the mortality low, but the market for fat sheep has not been very brisk. Prices for wool have been well maintained, and on account of the excellent season the clip has averaged fully 10 per cent. in weight above last year.

The pig industry is the least developed of our animal husbandry, although our climate is suited for raising pigs under field conditions.

Fruit crops have been fair, but prices locally are poor, and very little fruit will be suitable for export owing to the damage done by the unseasonable hail storms.

The poultry industry is not in a very flourishing condition, on account of the high cost of poultry-food.

The potato and onion crops have also experienced a serious drop in prices this season, being £3 10s. per ton for potatoes and £6 per ton for onions below last year.

Mixed farming is not generally carried on in this district, the farmers specializing in either dairying, wool, or stock-raising. The climate and farms generally are suitable for this class of farming, but it appears to have been neglected, probably on account of the labour question. With the exception of the Franklin County, where potatoes and onions are grown, agriculture is limited to forage crops for summer and winter feed.

Practically the same number of cows as last year has been milked, but as the result of herd-testing and systematic culling, the supply has been increased.

Owing to the fall in the price of phosphatic manures, the autumn requirements for top-dressing should be much more economical for the farmer than in previous years, and the whole district will benefit generally by increased production.

A new factory has been built for the Rodney Dairy Co. at Warkworth, while a new one is being built at Pukehuia by the Northern Wairoa Dairy Co. A new cement company at Whangarei Heads has lately been floated.

Land Board Work.—The Land Board held thirteen meetings, occupying twenty-seven days; the total number of items on the order paper amounted to 2,160, of which 1,309 were in connection with ordinary Crown lands, and the balance affected administration under the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act.

Mr. Hector Aitkenhead, who was a member of the Board since the inception of the district, died in March, 1926, and his place was filled by the appointment of Mr. F. M. Waters, of Papatoetoe, Chairman of the Manukau County Council. The loss to the Board by the death of Mr. Aitkenhead was a severe one, as he was a practical farmer and had a thorough knowledge of the lands in this district.

Lands Offered and Selected.—During the year a total area of 20,280 acres was offered for sale or selection on ordinary permanent tenures, a total of 11,855 acres being taken up by 173 selectors. In addition, a further 69 selectors took up 12,917 acres of abandoned rural properties bought in by the Department under the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act. The settlement of this latter class of property is receiving every attention, and is meeting with fair success.

The demand for small farmlets of good land, close to railway and school, still persists, but the supply is limited. However, a fair number of such areas, suitable for gardening, &c., was offered, a good proportion of the applicants being English new arrivals.

Several small building-lots near the city were put up for lease, mostly on E.R. tenure, and commanded keen competition.