

The revenue received during the year by way of rents and other payments, was £80,310. No estates were purchased during the year.

NELSON.

(A. F. WATERS, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

No new settlements were opened during the year, and there have been very few inquiries for land generally.

MARLBOROUGH.

(J. STEVENSON, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

My report on the settlement of Crown Lands applies also to land for settlements, and, without recapitulation, remarks on settlement farming must necessarily be brief.

The majority of the settlements in this district being established for a number of years, the settlers generally are in a sound position. In the more recently acquired properties there are the usual few instances where care must be exercised before stability is reached.

Climatic conditions were varied, but generally may be classed as favourable. Wet weather during spring, accompanied by severe frosts, somewhat affected returns from agricultural and dairy-farming, as well as affecting the early lambing and retarding shearing operations. The dairy-farmer, besides, has had to contend with the fall in price of butterfat; consequently he has not done as well as anticipated. Nevertheless, there is a hopeful tone as regards the future.

No new settlements were acquired during the year.

WESTLAND.

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

No new estates were acquired for settlement during the year. Estates previously purchased and settled are now well established, and are thriving and prosperous.

CANTERBURY.

(W. STEWART, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

Including estates acquired for discharged soldiers, the number of settlements in this district is 142. Although several properties were under offer to the Crown, no new estates were acquired during the past year. The older settlements are now well established, and with few exceptions the tenants are doing well. These exceptions comprise foothill estates in South Canterbury acquired in the years immediately prior to the war. Owing to the increased cost of agricultural work, and to the fact that the climate in many seasons is not suitable for ripening grain, many of these settlers are in difficulties. Improvements were also effected at a period of high prices, which has caused heavy interest charges on the land. This phase of settlement is being reviewed at the present time.

The past season generally has been a favourable one as far as weather conditions are concerned, and, with the exception of dairy-farmers, most settlers have had a successful year.

OTAGO.

(R. S. GALBRAITH, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

No new settlements in Otago were purchased during the year, and the number of settlements in the district remains the same as that of the previous year—sixty-four. The revenue for the year was £73,425, compared with £73,948 for the previous year—a difference of only £523. The arrears of rent at the 31st March amounted to £5,781, a decrease of £262 compared with the figures of the previous year. These figures give a pretty good indication of the flourishing state of the settlements as a whole. Two tenants during the year elected to purchase their leaseholds on the deferred-payment system, the area involved being 803 acres. The total area sold for cash or on deferred payments now amounts to 7,211 acres. The facilities for conversion to freehold are not being taken advantage of to any great extent, for two reasons—(1) The leasehold is proving to be a more saleable proposition, as there is less capital involved; and (2) the leaseholder is content to remain as he is at the lower annual charge, provided he is assured that he possesses the right to convert when it suits him to do so. As pointed out in my previous reports, the older-established settlements were purchased and settled at prices which assured success to those tenants who were capable farmers. These holdings are gradually changing hands, and the prices asked and obtained must cause some misgivings. On several occasions the Land Board refused to sanction transfers in cases where the consideration-money appeared to be excessive. Gladbrook, Poplar Grove, Wairuna, and Conical Hills Settlements are not so prosperous as could be wished, and it may be found necessary during the coming year to take some steps with a view to effecting an improvement in the prevailing conditions. The unselected portions of Clifton Settlement will be offered for sale by public auction in three farms at an early date, and I anticipate that these will be disposed of at prices which will show an increase on the upsets.

SOUTHLAND.

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

There is very little to report on lands bought and subdivided under the Land for Settlements Act. No new settlements were purchased, nor has there been any marked demand for land which would be opened under the conditions of the Land for Settlements Act. It may be at the present time