

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.)

The weather conditions during the past season have been very satisfactory for the farming community. Throughout the year periodical rains have fallen, with the result that there has been a luxuriant growth of grass; and this, together with the mild winter experienced, has enabled the dairy-farmer to get a good production from his herd from the start of the season.

Paspalum has again demonstrated its great value, the largest returns of butterfat being obtained from farms having a preponderance of this grass. When sown in conjunction with rye-grass and white clover it makes a splendid summer grass for the drier soils of the North.

Many crops of hay were spoilt in the early part of the season on account of the weather, and the making of ensilage had to be resorted to. It is anticipated that much more ensilage will be made in this district in future. Top-dressing is recognized as essential on all farms, and a big increase is noticed annually in the expenditure for manures.

Dairying Industry.—Butterfat returns have everywhere considerably increased, but on account of the low prices received it is doubtful whether the farmer will reach last year's income. Further areas of land are gradually being brought into profitable occupation. This, together with liberal top-dressing of old pastures and systematic culling and testing of the herds, is the only method whereby the settler can profitably farm his holding.

Cattle.—Right through the season values of heavy beef-cattle have been firm, and good prices have been realized. For guaranteed lots of dairy cows high prices have been obtained. Considerable increase is shown in the killings of beef at the local works.

Sheep and Wool.—Both have experienced a considerable drop in prices. Wool-values have been exceptionally low in comparison with last season. The condition of the flocks has been improved by the importation of heavy Romney rams. Fat lambs for the Home market brought good prices, but, unfortunately, owing to the excessive wet weather in the early part of the season, few of this class were available for export.

Pigs.—Pigs this season were in keen demand, and brought good prices. This was principally due to the high prices obtained for good heifer and steer calves, the rearing of which resulted in a decrease in the number of pigs.

Fruit.—The fruit-farmer has not had a very encouraging year, owing to unseasonable weather.

Cropping.—The wet weather has been against cropping generally, and on the gum lands most of the special forage crops have not been successful. Fortunately, the abundant supply of grass made up for this deficiency.

Lands offered and selected.—During the year an area of 20,271 acres was offered for sale or selection on permanent tenures, an increase of 544 acres over the previous year's offering. The demand for land continued to be keen, as is evidenced by the fact that the area selected, 37,846 acres, taken up by 250 selectors, eclipsed the exceptionally high total of the preceding year, when 27,852 acres were disposed of to 248 applicants. The land offered comprised mainly unimproved rural holdings. Land improved or partly improved was also sought after, and in most cases was readily disposed of. Another group of sections in the Orakei Garden Suburb was offered by public auction, and the response was good, as at previous sales. Several sections were disposed of at prices above the upsets, and the inquiries made subsequent to the sale revealed that public interest was being well maintained.

Freeholds.—The extent to which tenants are availing themselves of the right to acquire the fee-simple of lands held under lease from the Crown indicates that the provisions enabling them to do so are greatly appreciated. During the year freehold titles over 7,401 acres were given to ninety-one purchasers, as against last year's totals of seventy-six purchasers of 6,064 acres.

Roads.—To-day the provision of all-weather roads is a very necessary preliminary to land-settlement, and I am pleased to state that the mileage of metalled roads in this district is rapidly increasing. Further, the construction of the main highways between Auckland and Kaitia is now well in hand, and it is anticipated that after this coming winter through traffic will be possible all the year round. This will be much appreciated by our northern settlers, and will be a considerable help in settling the waste lands in the district.

Gum Lands.—Experiments are still being carried out by the officers of the Department of Agriculture. As a result of the legislation passed last session enabling advances to be made to Crown settlers, it is anticipated that large areas of gum lands thrown open for application will be profitably settled. This can only be accomplished by scientific and systematic farming, and settlers will have the advice of the expert officers of the Agriculture and this Department in this direction.