

## WELLINGTON.

(H. W. C. MACKINTOSH, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

In the northern and most difficult farming portion of the district farmers have generally had a poor year, owing to the fall in prices for wool, mutton, lamb, butter, &c.

The winter was a fairly mild one, the weather being good into the middle of spring, when it broke, and a very wet period followed, lasting into the new year. It was accordingly impossible in many localities to get in rape, &c., while shearing was held up in a number of cases until the beginning of 1930. The farmer depending on fat lambs did not do very well. He paid high prices for ewes, the lambs did not fatten on account of the wet season, and he did not obtain the usual prices. Wool-growers obtained only about one-third of the cheques they had received for wool for several years past; crops were fair, wheat and oats turning out well, although some growers experienced a difficulty in harvesting as a considerable area was down. Hay was very hard to save, and farmers in many instances had no option but to make their crops into ensilage. In the early period of the dairying season it seemed as if a record season would be experienced, but a dry spell ensued, and with the low price of butterfat the dairy-farmer will barely do as well as last season.

In the southern portion of the district, particularly in the Wairarapa, bountiful autumn rains produced an unusual flush of green feed. Unfortunately, a very late spring growth occurred, with dry conditions in October and November, and the variations of climate had a noticeable effect on production.

In the Wanganui and Rangitikei districts the winter was fairly mild, and cows came in in good condition. The continued wet weather produced an abundant growth of grass, and if prices for butterfat had held up the dairying season would have been a record one. As it is, dairy-farmers, in spite of increased yields, will come out about the same as last year.

Herd testing and culling are becoming increasingly popular, and marked improvement is noticed in many herds. Top-dressing is being carried out extensively, and the increasing use of fertilizer is changing the colour of the countryside. As in the northern portion of the district, hay was hard to save, and many farmers were forced by the wet weather to turn their crops into ensilage.

Wool-growers, like the pastoralists of the North, had not a good year, and will have to finance very carefully to make ends meet. Not only was the price of wool much below the price ruling in late years, but prices for fat stock averaged about 4s. per head below last season.

There is still a keen demand for land, both pastoral and dairying, and any areas of worth are readily selected.

## NELSON.

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

The farmers in the Nelson District have experienced rather a disappointing season, owing to unfavourable weather conditions and falling prices for wool and dairy-produce. The winter was mild with much rain, followed by a dry spring. The usual rains were unduly delayed, and wet weather then continued till the end of January. A long spell of dry weather extended into late autumn, and there is a likelihood of a shortage of feed during the coming winter.

*Earthquake.*—An earthquake of exceptional severity occurred on the 17th June, followed by lesser shocks at irregular intervals. The area of maximum intensity was fortunately in a sparsely inhabited locality, but the Counties of Murchison and Buller suffered severe damage to roads and farm property, and the rest of the district in a lesser degree. Land-slides on an unprecedented scale occurred, in some cases covering hundreds of acres. Fourteen persons lost their lives as a direct result of the earthquake, the majority being caught by land-slides. A fund was subscribed by the people of New Zealand for the relief of settlers affected by the earthquake. This money was allocated by relief committees appointed for the purpose, the services of this Department being employed in reporting on the various applications.

*Communications.*—The earthquake caused extensive slips on the Main Buller Road between Murchison and Inangahua Junction, and on the Westport-Karamea Road between the Mokihinui River and Te Namu. Several hundred men were put on to restore the roads, but it will take considerably over a year's work before these roads are reopened. To restore communication between Nelson and the West Coast a temporary main highway was opened through the Upper Maruia Valley to Reefton.

*Dairying.*—Owing to unfavourable weather conditions butter-fat production has been below normal. Prices of dairy-produce have shown a marked decline, with every indication of a period of depression. There has been a keen demand for weaner calves of beef breeds, owing to a shortage of run cattle. The Golden Bay Dairy Company has replaced its old factory with a spacious concrete structure, indicating the progress of dairying in the Takaka district.

*Sheep-farming.*—The sheep-farmers are hard hit by the serious drop in wool-prices, which in many cases were considerably below the cost of production. Prices of live-stock have likewise dropped, and sheepmen are faced with a lean year.

*Fruitgrowing.*—There is every indication of a record year for apple-growers. The export of fruit from this district will probably exceed three-quarters of a million bushels, exclusive of New Zealand consumption. Prices obtained for early shipments were very gratifying. This industry employs a considerable amount of labour, and the increased revenue coming into the district from this source will counteract the lessened returns from butter and wool.