

## CANTERBURY.

(W. STEWART, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The general report on conditions in Canterbury for the year is incorporated in the Land for Settlements' report, which covers the bulk of our holdings.

Our Crown land areas are mostly confined to the pastoral runs and small grazing-runs, and this class of tenant has been hardest hit by present abnormal conditions. Fine wool has slumped worse than crossbred wool, and this year's market for cull sheep and wether lambs has been disastrous. In many cases returns have not paid working-expenses, without any allowance for rent or interest on outlay for improvements, &c. In order to hold present tenants postponements are necessary where lessees have not themselves been able to establish reserves to tide over periods such as are now being experienced.

The efforts of the Forestry and Internal Affairs Departments have materially reduced the deer menace throughout the whole district.

With reference to education reserves being administered by the Land Board, a good proportion of these that have been due for renewal during the year have necessitated arbitration proceedings to finally arrive at the new rental.

Our largest group of education-reserve holdings (Isleworth) is very subject to damage by rising springs, and it is satisfactory to note that the settlers and County Council are likely to undertake a proper scheme of drainage, a policy which the Department has advocated for some time.

## OTAGO.

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

The conditions during the past year in the Otago Land District have been only fair as regards climatic conditions and production. In the southern part of the district a good deal of snow fell in the months of August and September, and lay on the flat country for a considerable time. Wet and showery weather was experienced through the spring and on till January. The result was that many farmers found it difficult to get in their turnip crops, and extra turnips will in some cases have to be bought to supplement partial failures. Dry conditions were experienced generally in North Otago, but, notwithstanding this, the wheat crops have turned out remarkably well. Large areas are being prepared for the coming season, and a considerable increase in the area put down in wheat in the Otago District can be expected. This is accounted for by the fact that the growers of wheat were in the fortunate position of being among the few who showed a good profit during the past slump year; but the majority of farmers recognize that they are not likely to obtain the same price next season as in the past. The slump prices for butterfat, wool, lambs, and surplus stock have created in Otago, in common with other districts, an unprecedented state of affairs. It is unnecessary to dwell on this phase of farming difficulties; suffice it to say that the Land Board is prepared to recommend relief in all reasonable cases, and I think it can be said that mortgagees and mercantile firms are prepared to extend equally sympathetic treatment.

There should be sufficient feed available in the southern part of the district to carry stock safely through the winter; but on account of the dry conditions which have prevailed in North Otago there is a possibility of a shortage of winter feed. Central Otago has been more fortunate, as the broken weather experienced during the spring and early summer produced abundance of feed. This part of the district has probably never looked better, and reports show that both grain and root crops have done well.

The fruitgrowers in Central Otago have experienced a good season and the apple crop is a good one, although no high prices can be expected. The Poolburn dam is practically completed, and additional water to supplement the present irrigation system which this governs will be available next season.

## SOUTHLAND.

(J. MACDONALD, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

Taken on the whole the weather conditions in Southland during the past year have not been favourable to farming operations. Too much rain, with occasional cold snaps in the spring and early summer, adversely affected the early dairying returns, and put a check on the number of fat lambs usually sold off the ewes. In the later summer months, however, weather conditions changed for the better, with the result that feed became plentiful, and stock should continue to do well on the pastures during the fall and early winter. Agricultural work in the spring was much retarded and, consequently, the harvest had been unusually late. The crops are prolific, but the quality of the grass-seed, oats, and wheat will hardly be up to the average. There was not a great snowfall on the high country, and the sheep thereon came through the winter in good condition. Snow losses were slight, but the lambing returns were rather disappointing.

Steady progress was made during the year in the matter of increased land-settlement, the number of entirely new selections being twenty-one, with an aggregate area of 2,343 acres. There is a steady demand for undeveloped land of reasonably good quality, the demand having been stimulated by the provisions for financial assistance contained in the Land Laws Amendment Act, 1929. To meet this demand three blocks will be offered for selection within the new few months. Two of these blocks are in the Gorge Road district, and comprise 1,000 acres of worked-out bush country divided into eight sections. The work of providing formed-road access has been in hand for some time, and upon its completion at an early date the sections will be offered for selection. The third block, at Pourakino Valley, contains some 2,500 acres of worked-out bush country, some of which has been cleared, burned, and sown in grass. The work of providing formed-road access is now in the hands of the Public Works Department, and as it is a work of some magnitude on which unemployed men are being placed some time must elapse before it can be completed. The number of holdings will then be decided upon, and these will be offered for selection without delay.