

APPENDIX.

REPORTS OF COMMISSIONERS OF CROWN LANDS.

NORTH AUCKLAND.

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

SOLDIER settlers during the past year have, in common with all farmers, felt the effects of restricted incomes, and have consequently had less money available for expenditure in carrying out further development work. The tendency has therefore been to approach the Department for additional assistance to pursue a consistent policy of development both in respect to top-dressing and improvements.

Throughout the year the general policy of securing orders for a percentage of settlers' cream cheques sufficient to meet annual charges and gradually reduce the arrears has been consistently followed.

Despite the financial difficulties that have prevailed throughout the period, it is pleasing to note that there is a distinct tendency for all mortgagors to face the position, and not readily abandon their holdings as was the case in the depression of 1921.

The few rural properties which have reverted to the Crown have been readily disposed of. Transfers of farm properties were not numerous during the earlier portion of the year, but later the demand quickened, and several properties have been transferred in many cases to civilian purchasers.

House property has not been greatly in demand. Pending redisposal of the securities, many of the Department's houses are at present let to better types of tenants. Unemployment, wage reductions, and the uncertainty of future conditions have all had a drastic effect on the market for property. Investors are nervous. The average home-seeker is unwilling to incur fresh obligations of a permanent nature, and prefers to rent on weekly or monthly tenancies.

Applications for readjustment of mortgage charges are being dealt with as expeditiously as possible, and there will be a tendency for these requests to increase in keeping with wage or salary reductions, &c.

AUCKLAND.

(K. M. GRAHAM, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

As the majority of soldier settlers in this district are engaged in dairying, the uniformly low prices ruling for butterfat throughout the season has resulted in greatly reduced returns, and though in some of the more favoured localities increased production will to some degree compensate for the low pay-out by factories, there are a number of cases where it is already apparent that the exceptionally dry spell of weather in mid-summer has caused a fall in production, which cannot be made up by the end of the production year.

The exceptionally low average prices for butterfat and wool, combined with the general fall in value of stock in all classes, constitute the chief characteristics of the present season, and in recognition of the extremely critical period through which soldier settlers are passing the Land Board has given close attention and the utmost consideration to all applications for relief by way of postponements of current charges, and to requests for further advances or financial assistance to cover the purchase of manure, and to meet pressing commitments in connection with farm expenditure entered into by settlers prior to the commencement of the season, and which would have been met in the ordinary course out of revenue, but for the slump and continued downward trend of export prices.

GISBORNE.

(E. H. FARNIE, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

A considerable number of cases of postponements of rent are under consideration due to diminished revenue this year, with a few due to the destruction of wool by fire following the earthquake in Napier. Other soldier settlers lost heavily through the destruction of the Wairoa Freezing-works.

As far as house properties are concerned, the market has been dead, although no difficulty is experienced in finding tenants. Fortunately, we have only four unlet houses on hand at present, and of these, all but one are sure to be disposed of by way of sale or lease. As a sign of the hard times through which we are passing, it may be mentioned that a number of mortgagors have, for the first time on record, been unable to pay their last instalments on the due date.

HAWKE'S BAY.

(J. D. THOMSON, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

In a few cases the Dominion Revaluation Board further reduced values of sections, but it is apparent that revaluation work is now about finished, and if settlers are anxious to have the value of their holdings reviewed it will be necessary to apply under the provisions of the Land Act. The majority of settlers are now quite satisfied that under normal conditions their values are correct.