

Particulars of the disastrous earthquake which visited the district are given in the report on the settlement of Crown lands. Soldier settlers were badly affected, and in numerous cases their houses were badly damaged, fences down, and land badly opened up with fissures and cracks. The soldier houses in Napier were considerably damaged, in practically every case the chimneys were wrecked, and in a large number of cases serious damage was caused to the structure. In a few cases the houses were wrecked beyond repair. Applications for assistance have been received from upwards of seventy owners, the damage ranging from about £10 to £200. A number of these are applying to the local authorities for assistance. In Hastings and Waipawa the damage was not so serious, being mostly collapsed chimneys.

#### TARANAKI.

(W. D. ARMIT, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The soldier settlers in this district have faced a very difficult year with courage and patience, and assistance has been granted wherever possible. In nearly every case production has been well maintained and one difficulty existing is to provide the necessary fertilizers for next season. The drop in cash returns is markedly shown in the dairy orders held by the Department, particularly in those cases where cheese-factories are supplied.

A great disparity exists between various factories, due to a variety of reasons. In one case heavy reclamations added to low price returns has placed a group of soldier settlers in a most difficult position, and one which calls for special consideration.

The fall in wool and stock prices is well known and requires no elaboration. A fair amount of wool is being held in store by various soldier settlers and conservative advances have been made on current account to assist in tiding over a lean period.

During the past year nine soldier farm properties have reverted to the Crown through abandonment, forfeiture, or foreclosure, five of which are being farmed temporarily by the Department pending a more favourable market for disposal of stock. Inquiry for dairy farms is fairly constant, but only five properties have been sold, as there is not a great demand for small grazing lots which the farms now on hand mostly comprise.

Of properties acquired under the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act, 353 farms are now held by soldiers and 132 by civilians. House properties held under mortgage number 481.

In six cases power of sale was exercised over house properties, whilst four re-sales resulted. The demand for houses is not great, and there are nine dwellings still available for disposal.

#### WELLINGTON.

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

The farms acquired by discharged soldier settlers both on leasehold under the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act, 1915, and on freehold under section 2 of the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act, 1917, are to be found right throughout the district, and the conditions of settlement outlined in the report on ordinary Crown lands apply with equal force to these settlers. A large number of the soldier settlers are on dairy farms, and, while they have not obtained prices up to last season's pay-out, they should still account for round about 1s. per pound butterfat, and, at this figure, are in a considerably better position than the wool-grower. The latter farmer has had a very poor year, his wool and stock sales having yielded very little over working-costs. The depression came at an unfortunate time, as most of the soldier settlers were beginning to feel the benefits of the liberal treatment meted out to them by the Dominion Revaluation Board. Some of the postponements granted by that Board are now coming to charge, but many settlers will not be able to meet them, and each case will require to be reviewed by the Land Board. Considerable improvements to their farms have been effected by soldier settlers, and those who have systematically top-dressed have derived considerable benefit in feed-supplies and increased returns.

#### NELSON.

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

The prevailing slump in market prices is affecting soldier settlement equally with ordinary settlement. Weather conditions throughout the year have been unsatisfactory and between diminished output and low prices, soldier settlers have had a difficult struggle. The majority view the position cheerfully and are doing their best to make ends meet by the exercise of thrift and economy.

There are comparatively few soldier settlers left who are not determined to make a success of their holdings, and, generally speaking, they compare very favourably in farming ability with civilian farmers.

A few cases have been reviewed by the Dominion Revaluation Board during the year where the settler's position showed that he was unable to meet the existing liability. The generous treatment afforded by the Board is greatly appreciated by the recipients, and they have all expressed their gratitude at the concessions made them.

#### MARLBOROUGH.

(P. R. WILKINSON, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The dry seasonal conditions, together with the low prices prevailing for dairy and other produce, has hit the soldier settler just as severely as other farmers. Prior to the depression it was thought that most of them would now be on their feet, but quite a lot of adjustment will be necessary to carry them over.

It is feared that quite a number of settlers will not be sufficiently financial to continue the good work of top-dressing, and in consequence the returns cannot be expected to be quite as good as formerly.