

APPENDIX.

EXTRACTS FROM REPORTS OF COMMISSIONERS OF CROWN LANDS.

NORTH AUCKLAND.

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

SOLDIER settlers in this district, in common with other Crown tenants, are experiencing the difficulties of the times, but all holdings under this scheme are now in an advanced stage of development, and settlers are doing their utmost to meet the lower produce prices by increasing production.

There is very little inclination shown to dispose of farms, and all are meeting their obligations to the greatest possible extent. Where reduced revenue has made it impossible for settlers to meet their obligations in full, the Land Board has met the settler with postponements and in some cases with remissions.

Advances for development-works are naturally decreasing, and this year shows a greatly diminished expenditure under this heading as compared with previous years.

Those holding houses mortgaged under the Discharged Soldier's Settlement Act have not remained unaffected by the prevailing conditions. Workers who have had their wages and salaries reduced are finding it difficult to meet interest and sinking-fund payments. The position is being met in most cases by varying the mortgages, and reducing the payments in keeping with the general fall in wages. Rents in Auckland have fallen very considerably during the year, and there has been considerable movement amongst the population in the search for cheaper rentals. A number of soldiers have abandoned their homes, and these have been let on weekly tenancies at current rental values.

AUCKLAND.

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

Prices for butterfat showed a further drop as compared with those for last season. The majority of soldier settlers in the district are dairying, and many have found it rather difficult to make ends meet. The necessity for increased production being evident, most settlers endeavoured to effect an increase, but a dry spell in the autumn nullified their efforts to a great extent. Various concessions had to be given to meet the position.

Sheep-farmers have had a very bad time. Wool prices fell away alarmingly, and in some instances were well below the cost of production. The Land Board has had to help numbers of these men by giving concessions in the matter of rent and interest. Many of them hardly made enough to even meet living expenses.

Owners of house properties have also had to be assisted by adjusting mortgages in numerous instances. Many men failed to pay their instalments for the first time on record, owing to loss of work, cuts in wages, &c.

Power of sale had to be exercised in a few hopeless cases, mostly house properties.

Taken all through, the spirit shown by soldier settlers has been excellent, despite a particularly trying time.

GISBORNE.

(H. L. PRIMROSE, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

There has been a considerable falling-off of revenue under this heading for the past year, and the outstanding rents and interest present a big problem for urgent consideration during the ensuing year. What the outcome will be it is hard to say, but the main consideration will be to keep up production and keep the men on the land. A lot will depend on future prices, for, with the present low level for practically all our products, it will be impossible for those with a load of arrears to pay them. Much writing-off will have to be faced before financial stability can be attained. Fresh advances have to be declined for new accounts, and present authorities are being conserved as much as possible for absolute necessities. Where the Department controls the stock accounts and the revenue, assistance has to be made for ordinary living and running expenses, but a firm hand is being retained.

No farm properties came back on our hands during the year, but three house properties had to be taken over, owing to bankruptcy in one case, and the death of the mortgagor in the other two. Many holders of house property are able to pay only the interest portion of their instalments.