

SMALL-FARMS SCHEME.

At the 31st March, 1934, the Small Farms Board had not been in operation for a full year, and, while the results may be regarded as satisfactory, the Board has not been able to see the full results in numbers settled, of its policy of taking in hand the development of virgin and largely unproductive land. As soon as the administrative machinery began to function smoothly, the Board decided that it should combine the actual settlement of unemployed with the provision of work for as many more men as was possible. To carry out this policy it was necessary that properties should be acquired which called for a large amount of development work of a manual nature—*e.g.*, bushfelling, scrub-cutting, clearing generally, fencing, roading, &c. Crown land capable of economic development was not available in many districts, and private lands had to be purchased or leased. Difficulty was met with immediately in regard to prices asked, and this difficulty is still being experienced. Notwithstanding falling prices of produce, owners were reluctant to accept prices in keeping with productive capacity. Several properties were acquired, however, and work commenced. Some of these are now reaching the stage when they can be settled, and the policy followed is to select the most suitable men from those engaged in the work of development and to allot the subdivisions to them. At the 31st March, 1934, there were some 570 men engaged on development blocks, totalling 37,451 acres, which are estimated to provide 347 separate farms.

Parallel with its activities in development work, the Board has considered applications for individual properties, the offering of which for the purposes of the scheme has in most cases been arranged by the applicants themselves, and a total of 229 applications have been approved, covering an area of 11,507 acres.

With regard to the type of farming carried on, the principal line has been dairying, because of the necessity for obtaining immediate returns, and because of the small outlay on stock as compared, for example, with sheep. The Board has endeavoured to keep the establishment cost per settler below £1,200, as for a going concern, and it would not have been possible to put men into sheep-farming on a self-supporting scale for this sum. Dairying has therefore been the basis of calculation in the subdivision of land for small farms, but no actual restriction has been put upon the settlers themselves, who have been free to develop side-lines according to their inclinations, and the suitability of their properties.

The Board has on several occasions considered the question of the wisdom of establishing further purely dairying propositions, and for some time has encouraged mixed farming or lamb-fattening on a small scale, but under intensive farming conditions. This type of farming permits a settler to increase or reduce his activities from year to year in any particular branch, according to market fluctuations.

The claims of the small holder have not been overlooked, and a number of sections of about 5 acres each has been provided in suitable localities where the settlers can grow fruit, market truck, and go in for poultry, one or two cows, and perhaps a few pigs. As examples, the Richmond Block, near Napier (thirty-eight settlers), and Karamu Block, near Hastings (nineteen settlers), may be quoted, while others have been set up in districts where seasonal work is obtainable.

The total authorities issued by the Board to the 31st March, 1934, were £282,732, and as at that date the results are shown in the following figures:—

| | Number of Holdings. | Total Area. | Average Area. |
|---|---------------------|-------------|---------------|
| | | Acres. | Acres. |
| (1) Individual holdings settled during the year ended 31st March, 1934 | 229 | 11,507 | 50 |
| (2) Blocks in course of development or the development of which has been approved | 347 | 37,451 | 109 |
| (3) Number of share milkers established : 54. | | | |

Original Small Farms Scheme :—

| | |
|---|----------|
| (1) Number of individual settlers | 488 |
| Less holdings closed during year | 25 |
| | 463 |
| (2) Number of share milkers | 265 |
| Less closings | 4 |
| | 261 |
| (3) Total expenditure to 31st March, 1933 | £142,000 |
| Grand totals to 31st March, 1934— | |
| Settled on individual holdings | 692 |
| Share milkers | 315 |
| Total authorities issued | 424,732 |

SPECIAL SETTLEMENT OF INFERIOR LANDS.

The following summary of the lands dealt with during the year is furnished in accordance with the provisions of section 223 (14) of the Land Act, 1924 :—

(a) Aggregate area of land set apart : 144 acres.

(b) Number of allotments and aggregate area disposed of : three allotments, 390 acres.

The total number of allotments taken up and the area held as at 31st March, 1934, was thirty-three allotments, 6,821 acres.