

The revenue returns for the year have shown a decided improvement. The gross receipts under all headings showed an increase of £58,167, or 25 per cent. approximately, on the previous year's figures, indicating that most of our settlers realize their obligations to the Department and are making an effort to meet at least a portion of their charges in spite of the financial stress under which they have been working.

Settlers, both Crown and others, are still availing themselves freely of the opportunities afforded under the Unemployment 4A and 4B Schemes, and many have thus been enabled to carry out essential development work on their holdings, which would otherwise have had to be deferred until better times. These schemes have entailed much additional work for an already busy field and office staff.

GISBORNE.

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

After a long period of falling prices, and a gradually diminishing revenue position, one was apt to be rather pessimistic this time last year as to the outcome of what appeared at the outset to be another slump year. The long-looked-for silver lining to the dark cloud of depression was hardly in evidence, however optimistic one was inclined to be. However, what the subsequent rise in the price of wool meant to a large sheep-farming area such as the Gisborne district is now a matter of common knowledge. Our revenue made a wonderful recovery, a rise of nearly 44 per cent. on the previous year being shown, and this must be considered very satisfactory indeed.

But, whereas the sheep-farmer has reason for being pleased with the year's results, the same cannot be said of our dairy-farmers. In spite of the absence of drought conditions, a more satisfactory rainfall, and better pastures, which all combined to ensure increased production, the very low pay-out on butterfat was a severe blow to this industry, and relief is now a matter of extreme urgency. A policy somewhat on the lines of that adopted in the case of pastoral properties seems desirable, and would go a long way towards helping the industry, until it can view the future with as much satisfaction as the pastoral industry is now doing.

A big problem affecting farming on the flats—the risk of flood damage from the Waipaoa River in times of very heavy rains—has been taken in hand by the Public Works Department, and when the proposed remedial measures have been completed this risk should be greatly lessened.

HAWKE'S BAY.

(J. F. QUINN, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The weather conditions during the past year have been generally favourable to the farming community and there is an abundance of hay and root crops for the coming winter.

As a result of the increased prices realized for wool and lambs the position of the sheep-farmers has been considerably improved. Many of those farming scrub lands, who have been able to do very little scrub-cutting during the past few years, are now in a better position to have their sections cleared, and a large area of scrub is now being cut, particularly in the Porangahau district. In all cases advantage is being taken of the assistance given by the Unemployment Board under the 4B Scheme. The improvement is also reflected in the revenue of the Department for this district, the total receipts being over 50 per cent. in excess of the amount collected during the previous year.

Owing to the continued low prices for dairy-produce, dairy-farmers are finding it increasingly difficult to meet their obligations and maintain their farms, and in many cases it will be necessary to grant some relief by remitting or postponing rent.

Orchardists have had a good productive season, but owing to the poor prices realized, the net returns, after meeting charges for packing and marketing, &c., are very small, with the result that few of those engaged in this industry are able to meet their obligations in full.

TARANAKI.

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

The chief feature of interest to note was the welcome rise in the price of wool and sheep. This has put new heart into the sheep-farmers, and in many cases enabled them to clear off accumulations of back debts. This particularly refers to those who had been able to hold over their wool for several seasons, and who were fortunate enough to have their wool sold at the early sales. A small drop occurred in the price as the selling season advanced, but on the whole the prices realized were a magnificent advance on the disastrous figures of the past three years. The dairy-farmer has not been so fortunate, as the butterfat price, after touching approximately 1s. a pound in the spring, rapidly dropped, until in January it was down to a little over 6d. The effect has been that rents and interest have been unpaid and top-dressing has been neglected, while in many cases lack of means has not allowed the farmer to adequately cope with noxious weeds, such as ragwort. This curse to the dairy-farmer shows no signs to diminution; in fact, it seems on the increase as it is left unchecked in numbers of cases, and good farmers complain that, where they have properly attended to the weed on their holdings, neglect alongside soon brings it back on their farms, thus rendering all their efforts abortive. The cheapest and best method of control appears to be a decrease in the number of dairy cows and a partial return to sheep.

The rainfall for the year was an average one and climatic conditions in the winter and spring were exceptionally good; the summer, however, was cold and abnormal. The weather was rather dry in the early summer, but later rains brought on a good flush of grass and a plentiful supply of pasture was assured for the autumn. There should be no shortage of fodder for the winter, as ample supplies of hay and ensilage have been provided, and more attention has been paid to the growing of root crops.