

1934.
NEW ZEALAND.

DEPARTMENT OF LANDS AND SURVEY.

DRAINAGE OPERATIONS IN HAURAKI PLAINS.

REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH, 1934, TOGETHER WITH STATEMENTS
OF ACCOUNTS.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly pursuant to Section 20 of the Hauraki Plains Act, 1926.

Department of Lands and Survey, Wellington, 1st August, 1934.

SIR,—

I have the honour to present herewith the report of the Chief Drainage Engineer on operations carried out during the past year on the Hauraki Plains in accordance with the provisions of the Hauraki Plains Act, 1926.

I have, &c.,

W. ROBERTSON,
Under-Secretary for Lands.

The Hon. E. A. Ransom, Minister of Lands.

REPORT OF CHIEF DRAINAGE ENGINEER.

SIR,—

I have the honour to submit the twenty-sixth annual report on the reclamation works carried out on the Hauraki Plains during the year ending 31st March, 1934.

The dairy-produce market remains depressed to a degree that has marked the past year as probably the most difficult period in the history of the settlement of the reclaimed swamp lands of the Hauraki Plains. The settlers on the Plains are essentially dairy-farmers, and, as the result of farm development and improved drainage, the output of dairy-produce has been rapidly expanding, particularly during recent years, when favourable seasons have been experienced. While precise forecasts of future developments are impossible, consideration of the present produce-market position suggests two fairly obvious lines of action to meet changed conditions—viz., (1) adoption of mixed-farming methods for more diversified production; (2) winter milking to spread production more evenly throughout the year. A few years ago these methods could not be recommended for the Hauraki Plains; but the level of efficiency and amenity prevailing throughout the district has been considerably raised during the past few years, and they can be adopted to-day. The result will be that, to the economic gain from year-round production will be added some small measure of social gain from unemployment relief. Another possible means of increasing returns and improving the pasture is the fattening of lambs. The railway now provides quick transport for lambs from the East Coast to the rich pastures of the Hauraki Plains, where, under suitable conditions, they fatten with remarkable rapidity, and at the same time they consume the surplus grass during the “flush” of the season. In view of the satisfactory prices received for fat lambs, the Plains farmers should look into the possibilities of definite gain in this direction.

Expansion along these lines will demand a very high state of efficiency in the drainage system, and it would be disastrous if, through a false sense of security, resulting from a succession of good seasons, or through financial difficulties, the drainage system were neglected. In one district, where the drainage system has recently been handed over by the Department to local-body control, the Board was unable to carry out the annual drain-cleaning last year, and it was only the exceptionally