

APPENDIX.

EXTRACTS FROM REPORTS OF COMMISSIONERS OF CROWN LANDS.

NORTH AUCKLAND.

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

THE past season has been one of serious difficulty for the bulk of soldier settlers in this district owing to the reliance placed on dairy-farming by the great majority.

The Department is brought into the closest contact with the financial difficulties, and it has been essential to carefully consider the welfare of the settlers and their families, together with the efficient maintenance of the farms. The general policy has been to allow reasonable living expenses as a first charge, sufficient top-dressing to maintain production, and working-expenses before allocating revenue to land charges. This has necessarily resulted in a budgetary form of finance requiring investigation as to farm production in very many cases. The necessity for exploiting side-lines such as maize-growing and pig husbandry is generally realized, and Crown mortgagors are encouraged to exploit these possibilities.

The grazier soldier settler has experienced an uplift, and can look to the future with more confidence. Wool, fat lamb, and sheep prices have shown a marked improvement, enabling annual charges to be met for the first time in several years.

The position in respect of the soldier dwelling mortgagor has not improved. Reduced earnings and loss of employment continues to force many of our mortgagors to abandon their houses. Re-sales are rarely effected, but little difficulty is experienced in securing tenants. The Department has carried out extensive repairs and renovations to abandoned houses over the past twelve months. In addition assistance has been given where required to numerous mortgagors to paint and repair exteriors with a view to the preservation of Crown security.

AUCKLAND.

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

As far as dairy-farmers are concerned the season was a most unfortunate one. Butterfat prices showed a still further drop, and it would appear that the payout for the season will not amount to more than about 8d. Production again showed a marked increase, but, despite that, the falling-off in farm revenues was serious. Assistance by way of reduction of the percentage of cream cheque orders was given as far as possible.

As far as sheep-farmers are concerned the position has been much better. The marked increase in wool prices and the corresponding increase in values for sheep has helped the sheep-farmers very materially, and, providing prices remain anything like normal, they should have no difficulty in carrying on.

Owners of house properties have also been in difficulties, and relief by way of capitalization and extension of term has been given in a number of cases. Generally speaking, house properties have been well maintained.

GISBORNE.

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

The soldier settlers are now to all intents and purposes part of the Department's great family of settlers, and so the greater part of my remarks in my main report concerning the conditions in this district during the past year apply equally to them. They are principally engaged in the two great branches of farming—that is, in sheepfarming and in dairying. The position of the pastoralists has improved very considerably, and their financial outlook is fairly bright, but not so their less fortunate comrades who depend for their material prosperity on the price of butterfat. In their case arrears have increased rapidly and the outlook is not very hopeful.

As far as the housing position is concerned, there is no improvement, and there are more men now dependent on relief works for a living, so that arrears are bad with little hope of improvement. A few foreclosures are recorded for the year, but only in very bad cases where the position was hopeless, or where the properties were abandoned. All the securities seem to be fairly well maintained.