

HAWKE'S BAY.

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

The position of the soldier settlers engaged in sheep-farming has been considerably improved, and the majority of them have been able to meet current rent and interest and reduce arrears. On the other hand, those engaged in dairying have had a difficult year owing to low prices.

Many of the mortgagors of house properties have been unemployed and have been unable to meet the instalments of principal and interest in full, and it has been necessary in many cases to grant relief by suspending the payments of principal.

Hunter Soldiers' Assistance Trust Board.—The Board held four meetings during the year, and loans totalling £1,890 were granted to soldier settlers for improvements to their farms. Grants to the amount of £180 were approved in the case of nineteen orphan children of deceased soldiers.

TARANAKI.

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

Like the ordinary lessee, the soldier dairy-farmer has been faced with a very disappointing season, the price of butterfat dropping until a new low level of 64s. was recorded. Production generally has increased and there has been an abundance of feed. Partial drought conditions in December, unusual in this district, did not affect the supply of milk to any extent. The Department has found it necessary in large numbers of cases to assist farmers in the purchase of manures and, although milk orders are largely held, it is realized that in a high percentage of cases the returns will be insufficient to meet charges. It should be noted that the provident farmer goes in for pigs as a side-line to improve his income, but it is disappointing to record that more use is not made of this usually productive mode of supplementing the returns.

With the welcome rise in the price of wool and stock, the sheep-farmer is now in a much better position, and in the majority of cases will be able to pay his way.

Five properties are being successfully farmed by managers under direct control of the Department, and it is proposed to put these on the market when conditions improve. It is satisfactory to note that under departmental control these farms are all showing a profit.

Difficulty is still being experienced in collecting instalments from a number of house-property mortgagors, and the Department has had to extend a considerable amount of leniency. Charges have been reduced by granting fresh mortgages for the balances outstanding, and in other cases suspensions of principal for various periods have been allowed.

WELLINGTON.

(H. W. C. MACKINTOSH, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The majority of soldier settlers in the Wellington District follow dairying for a livelihood, and they have had a fairly poor season as far as returns from sale of produce are concerned. Climatic conditions were, for the most part, good, and in most localities excellent crops of hay were saved. Dairy stock came through the winter to the spring in good condition. The opening payouts were satisfactory, and the season gave promise of being a successful one, but prices for butterfat slumped badly. The few soldier settlers who follow sheep and cattle raising have had a fairly good year on account of the sharp rise in the prices of wool and fat stock. The outlook at the beginning of the year was gloomy for the pastoralist, as he had not been able to build any reserves from the previous year's working, but when the wool-sales opened the prospect was much brighter and wool was quitted at satisfactory prices.

Soldier settlers are not confined to any particular locality, but are to be found right throughout the length and breadth of the district, so that the remarks made in the general report on land-settlement will apply to those men who have been settled under the provisions of the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Acts.

NELSON.

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

The slump in staple products has made things very difficult for many of the soldier settlers. Fortunately, there are a number engaged in fruit, tobacco, or hop growing who are unaffected by the slump in dairy-produce. Generally speaking, most of the soldier settlers who could be described as permanent failures have now left their holdings, and the remaining settlers are of a type that will make good with a little assistance to help them over the present depression.

MARLBOROUGH.

(P. R. WILKINSON, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The general report and report on land for settlements apply with equal force to the areas held by discharged soldiers.

The greater percentage of discharged soldiers are on dairy-farms, and consequently have had a very trying year; but the majority are meeting the present conditions in a very commendable spirit.