

OTAGO.

SIR,—

Dunedin, 13th May, 1899.

In accordance with Order in Council of 17th December, 1898, I have the honour to forward the Report of the School Commissioners of the Otago Provincial District for the year ended 31st December, 1898.

During the year the Commissioners held fifteen meetings, which, with one exception, were attended by the whole of the members. The number of tenants on the rent-roll is now 856, and it will readily be seen that the routine business incidental to the efficient management and supervision of such a large trust entails the sacrifice of a great deal of the Commissioners' time at their meetings, which absorb a full day, and sometimes two, in each month. In addition to the management of the endowments, the Commissioners have at present the sum of £28,618 11s. 5d. (proceeds of sale of endowments) lent on mortgage over freehold security, and the supervision of this investment, which embraces thirty-two mortgages, requires considerable time and attention.

In accepting a security for the investment of capital, the Commissioners now make it a rule only to advance money on rural land which, in the event of its falling into their hands under power of mortgage, could be advantageously added to the endowment; and, in addition to obtaining a report and recommendation from a competent valuer, they satisfy themselves personally as far as possible that the security is a desirable one.

During the year the Commissioners leased twenty sections for pastoral purposes, forty-three sections for agricultural purposes, and six township sections. The area of the pastoral land was 3,528 acres, leased to ten tenants at an annual rent of £32 11s. 2d., or 5½d. per acre. The area of the agricultural land was 1,813 acres, leased to twenty-nine tenants at £370 3s. 6d. per annum, or 4s. 1d. per acre. The township sections contain 1 rood each, and were leased to six tenants at £6 10s. per annum, or from 10s. to £3 each.

During the year the sum of £680 13s. 1d. was received in repayment of loans, and £4,010 was advanced on mortgage at 5 per cent. interest.

Of the amount shown in the statement of receipts and expenditure as arrears of rent on the 31st December, 1898, the sum of £2,791 11s. has since been collected, and, as the most of the tenants are now realising on their crops, a large portion of the balance due will shortly be paid. As I have already explained in former reports, the rents are all payable half-yearly in advance, and of those falling due towards the end of the year a great number are not paid until after harvest.

The amount of £2,351 4s. 7d. shown under the head of expenditure in the statement of receipts and expenditure seems to be unduly large, and in explanation I would like to say that £813 1s. 4d. was paid to the Stock Department for clearing rabbits from the Wendon Runs prior to tenants being found for them; £133 6s. was paid for the survey of a new block for settlement; £201 16s. 9d. was paid for improving the reserves by draining, road-making, &c.; and £90 8s. 7d. was returned to the Government for train-fares, stamps, and telegrams, &c. (£47 3s. 8d. being train-fares of country Commissioners in connection with their attendance at meetings in Dunedin).

The sum of £39 2s. 6d. was collected for the preparation of leases by the Commissioners' office staff, and should be deducted from the cost of management. By deducting the foregoing figures it will be seen that the actual cost of management was £1,073 9s. 5d., or about 5½ per cent. on the money collected during the year.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Minister of Education, Wellington.

J. P. MAITLAND, Chairman.

GENERAL STATEMENT of RECEIPTS and EXPENDITURE for the Year ending 31st December, 1898.

				Primary.			Secondary.			Total.					
<i>Receipts.</i>															
To Credit balances—				£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.			
Bank of New Zealand				...	...	...	...	...	...	156	15	10			
Bank of New Zealand, fixed deposits...				...	...	...	...	...	...	5,000	0	0			
National Bank of New Zealand, fixed deposits...				...	...	...	...	...	...	6,700	0	0			
Arrears of revenue for previous years, viz.,—															
Rents of reserves				...	...	...	5,658	5	3	128	0	6	5,786	5	9
Interest on mortgages				...	...	...	184	8	5	...	...	...	184	8	5
Revenues, viz.,—															
Rent of reserves for current year (including £61 15s. refunded by Southland County Council)				...	...	...	8,756	8	6	551	1	2	9,307	9	8
Interest on mortgages				...	...	...	1,042	3	7	...	...	...	1,042	3	7
Interest on fixed deposits				...	...	...	365	10	0	...	...	...	365	10	0
Other receipts, viz.,—															
Net proceeds of land sales				...	...	...	1,367	0	11	...	...	...	1,367	0	11
Repayment of loans				...	...	...	680	13	1	...	...	...	680	13	1
Deposit received on purchase of security				...	...	...	500	0	0	...	...	...	500	0	0
Costs received for preparing leases				...	...	...	39	2	6	...	...	...	39	2	6
Valuation for improvements				...	...	...	29	8	6	...	...	...	29	8	6
Refund of rates				...	...	...	3	13	6	...	...	...	3	13	6
Refund of insurance premiums				...	...	...	4	1	0	...	...	...	4	1	0
Refund of legal expenditure				...	...	...	0	5	0	...	...	...	0	5	0
Refund of office rent				...	...	...	9	0	0	...	...	...	9	0	0
Office rent, Otago High Schools Board				...	...	...	10	0	0	...	...	...	10	0	0
Amount received for fencing on surrendered leases and apportioned with primary rents				...	...	...	141	1	6	...	...	...	141	1	6
Total receipts				...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	31,326	19	3