

1943.

NEW ZEALAND.

DEPARTMENT OF LANDS AND SURVEY.

SETTLEMENT OF CROWN LANDS

(ANNUAL REPORT ON).

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

Department of Lands and Survey, Wellington, 12th April, 1943.

SIR,—

I have the honour to submit herewith the annual report on the settlement of Crown lands for the year ended 31st March, 1943, together with particulars of operations under the Small Farms Act, 1932–33, and the Land Laws Amendment Act, 1929.

I have &c.,

R. G. MACMORRAN,
Under-Secretary.

The Hon. the Minister of Lands.

REPORT.

GENERAL REVIEW.

As mentioned in last year's report, the general operations of the Department are being considerably restricted owing to war conditions. As much work as possible has been carried out in the direction of preparing Crown-owned areas for future settlement by returned servicemen, but these operations have been affected by the shortage of essential materials and the lack of available labour.

The reports received from the various districts indicate that settlers generally have had a satisfactory year. In the northern portion of the North Island, however, drought conditions during the summer caused a falling off in production.

Crown tenants, like other sections of the farming community, are feeling the effects of the shortage of phosphatic fertilizers, while, owing to the difficulty in obtaining suitable labour, noxious weeds are spreading and rabbits are showing an increase, particularly in the southern districts.

With production reaching a satisfactory level and with good prices for farm products, the majority of the tenants have been able to meet their rental commitments; but, on account of snow losses in the previous year, it has been necessary to grant relief by way of remission of rent to a number of holders of high-country runs in the South Island.

Extracts from reports of Commissioners of Crown Lands, dealing generally with settlement conditions in the various districts, are included in an Appendix to this report.

LEGISLATION.

By section 21 of the Statutes Amendment Act, 1942, the membership of the Land Settlement Board was increased by the appointment of representatives of the State Advances Corporation and the New Zealand Returned Services' Association.

The Reserves and other Lands Disposal Act, 1942, contains nineteen sections dealing with Crown lands, reserves, endowments, and other lands. One section of this Act makes special provisions with respect to the gift of land to the Crown by the late Sir Robert Anderson, of Invercargill, for the settlement of discharged servicemen, and establishes the Anderson Trust Board.

LAND TRANSACTIONS.

During the year, 291,613 acres were taken up on various tenures, the number of selectors being 649 under all headings. These figures include 347 sections, comprising altogether an area of 42,337 acres, taken up under temporary miscellaneous leases and licenses, so that the selections on permanent tenures number 302 sections, covering a total area of 249,276 acres. Only a relatively small proportion of this land comprised entirely new selections. Many of the selections consisted of additions to existing holdings, while the area involved included a number of sections which had reverted to the Crown on account of forfeiture or surrender of leases. The land taken up also included some pastoral runs which had been surrendered and reselected pursuant to section 277 of the Land Act.

At 31st March the tenants on the books of the Department numbered 35,430 occupying a total area of approximately 17,545,657 acres.

POSTPONEMENTS, REMISSIONS, AND ARREARS OF RENT AND INTEREST.

Rents and interest the payment of which remained postponed at 31st March amounted to £20,616. Arrears of rent and interest at the 31st March (including arrears in respect of the current half-yearly charge) totalled £176,792, while remissions for the year totalled £27,858.