

The Crown Lands Rangers for the West Coast report as follows:—

Six hundred and forty-four inspections have been made. Improvements to the value of £59,014 should have been effected on the sections inspected, and the value of the improvements done is £122,141, thus showing a surplus of £63,127 over and above the requirements of the Acts, which, I think, is very satisfactory. There were fifty-four defaulters as to improvements, and sixty-two as to residence. The default in the former is chiefly due to the want of road-access, and to the fact that the sixth year's improvements were due on a number of sections, and these requirements are somewhat heavy—viz. £1 per acre on first-class land in addition to the 30 per cent. on capital value. This comes particularly heavy on settlers who have only bridle-road access, some of whom have consequently been unable to fully comply. The default in residence is mainly owing to want of road-access, and in lesser degree to a want of energy and perseverance in some settlers.

In the Waimarino district the settlers continue to do well. Most of them are dairying, and there is a marked increase in the number of milk-suppliers to the butter-factory. It is pleasing to note that the factory test is as high as 4·8 in several instances: this is higher than in many more favourably situated localities. It is under consideration to establish another creamery on the Raetihi-Ohura Road. This will be a great boon to the settlers in the Marton No. 3 Farm Homestead Block and others in that locality. There is a good demand for land here, and any sections offered for selection are readily taken up. There are now three sawmills in the block, but as yet little timber is sent away owing to heavy cartage and freights. During the greater part of last summer daily steamers have been running between Wanganui and Pipiriki, which has been a great convenience to the Waimarino settlers. Low fares and freights still continue.

In the Pohonui-a-tane and Te Kapua Blocks (Hunterville Nos. 1, 2, and 3, Somerville, and Palmerston North Knights of Labour Farm Homestead Association Blocks) the settlers are doing well and improving their holdings in a satisfactory manner. The want of dray-road access is much felt, as it prevents them from dairying. As soon as dray-roads are formed the settlers intend to start dairying, and I believe all arrangements are made for the erection of a butter-factory and one or more creameries as soon as the milk can be carted thereto.

In the Marton Nos. 1 and 2, Pohangina, Umutoi, Salisbury, and Delaware Farm Homestead Blocks, situated between the Rangitikei and Pohangina Rivers, satisfactory progress has been made by the settlers, a number of whom are dairying. On the whole, the road-access in these blocks is further advanced than in many others, owing to the fact that the settlers have raised loans for widening and metalling the roads in the different blocks—a good example for others to follow.

In the Awarua Block the settlers continue to make good improvements; many of them are now dairying. A butter-factory has been built at Utiku, and creameries at Taihape and Mangaweka are worked in conjunction therewith. It is only a matter of a short time when more creameries will be erected in other parts of the block. The roads leading to the different parts are well advanced, but the main road was almost impassable last winter, and as but few repairs were made last summer I fear no carting can be done this coming winter. It is stated that the railway will be open for traffic to Mangaweka in a few months, and this will greatly assist the settlers in the district generally.

Village Settlements.

Horowhenua and Levin.—The settlers here continue to make good progress. Several of them have stumped the larger portion of their sections. Those with larger sections are dairying; others, utilise their holdings as market gardens; some are in business in Levin, and simply use their holdings as a home.

Rewa, Pakihikura, Karewarewa, Taihape, and Oraukura.—In these settlements most of the settlers are dairying, and they have been allowed to enlarge their holdings where deemed advisable and it was possible to do so.

West Waitapu, Welford, Poukioire, Mangaweka, Rakau Toru, Hawaenga, and Raetihi.—In these settlements the settlers depend mostly on outside employment for a living.

On the whole, the village settlers seem contented and are fairly prosperous.

Improved Farms.

Pemberton.—Situated on the main road from Mangaweka to Rangiwahia. This settlement comprises thirteen holdings, occupied by sixty-eight persons. The stock comprises 436 head of cattle, 33 horses, 257 sheep, and 38 pigs. 1,210 acres has been felled and grassed. The total value of the improvements now on the land is £4,635. There is a creamery in the block, and most of the settlers are suppliers. The success of this settlement is now assured.

Kawhata.—Near Mangaweka, on the left bank of the Rangitikei River. There are twelve holdings, occupied by seventy-seven persons. Several substantial dwellings have been built, and the settlers are doing well, especially since a creamery has been built near Mangaweka, thus enabling many of them to go in for dairying on a larger scale than formerly. The total value of the improvements now on the land is £2,605, exclusive of £1,396 advanced by the Crown. The stock comprises 309 head of cattle, 29 horses, 218 sheep, and 59 pigs.

Hautapu.—All the eleven sections are occupied. The total population is fifty-one souls. Improvements to the value of £741 have been effected at the settlers' own cost. The stock comprises 273 head of cattle, 50 horses, 9 sheep, and 88 pigs. Seven settlers are dairying. There is now a formed dray-road to the block, but a bridge across the Hautapu River is much needed, as the ford is a dangerous one. This settlement has made satisfactory progress.