

of non-residents appears large, but of these fifty are expected to fully comply shortly. In some of the farm-homestead associations, now established seven or eight years, there are still a few absentees; these have again been dealt with by the Land Board recently, and it is now recognised in the farm-homestead settlements that any further concessions to defaulters will be made at the expense of and to the detriment of resident selectors.

The steady diminution of persons on the land is noticeable in connection with village settlements, and calls for attention. Some of the probable causes are noted in the village-homestead settlement report of this year.

Roads.—During the year a good number of horse-tracks or by-roads has been converted into summer dray-roads, whilst metal has been laid in several places on the main roads, but a great deal of road making and metalling is still required to enable settlers to approach suitable markets and thereby reap the benefit of their labours.

Dairying Industry.—Since last report the Makuri Dairy Company have erected at Makuri a large butter-factory, fitted up with the latest improvements, also branch creameries at Coonor and Mangatiti, and contemplate the erection of others in suitable places. From various causes they commenced operations late in the season, but shareholders and suppliers look forward to a prosperous season this coming year. A butter-factory has also been erected by private enterprise at Pongaroa, and has been in active operation for some time, much to the satisfaction of settlers in the locality. The industry has also extended considerably in the older settled portions of the district. A central factory, capable of dealing with large supplies, and now turning out about 3 tons per day, has been erected at Eketahuna, and branch establishments have been enlarged.

The season has been remarkable for lateness and almost constant rain, consequently very little summer weather has been experienced. Crops and harvesting have been delayed, but the yields, especially in the southern portion of the district, have been prolific.

Bush-burning from same cause has been delayed, but good burns have been obtained in the eastern portion of the district.

Village Settlements.

Tutaekara, Mangaramarama, Paa Creek, Mangaone, and Makuri Village Settlements were inspected during the year, and the following visited: Hastwell, Pahiatua, Mangatainoka, Pongaroa, and Rakaunui.

Of 219 selectors, 186 are residing, twenty-six are not required to reside, and nine are defaulters as to residence. Full reports have been furnished regarding the latter, and the majority are expected to comply shortly.

The desire to increase areas mentioned in previous reports still exists. In some instances selectors have disposed of their village sections to acquire larger areas elsewhere.

The improvements effected on village holdings are largely in excess of lands held under other systems. The reason probably is owing to limited areas enabling selectors to improve the whole, whilst necessary fencing and buildings tend to increase the total values. The latter cannot be expected to increase, as most of the sections are fully improved; whilst the number of souls on the land shows a steady decrease, owing principally to the following causes: Not required to reside after the ten years, grown-up members of families working for themselves, grouping of sections also tends to lessen the number. There are now 774 souls on the land as against 876 last year and 93 the previous year, showing a reduction of 102 and fifty-six respectively.

Improvements required, £6,140; effected, £32,600; surplus, £26,260. From the surplus improvements it will be seen the progress made is satisfactory.

Land for Settlements.

Langdale Settlement.—Situated in the Whareama district, distant about twenty-five miles from Masterton by coach-road, and opened for selection on the 19th March, 1901. The altitude varies from 70 ft. to 1,200 ft. Excluding the township and suburban sections the total area available for settlement is 9,197 acres, divided into twenty-three holdings, ranging from 34½ acres to 1,030 acres, averaging about 400 acres. Of nineteen required to reside, seventeen are residing, two have dwellings in course of erection and will comply shortly. Of the resident selectors, seven are residing in buildings originally erected on the estate, and ten have erected dwellings. There are ten married men, with their wives and fifteen children, and seven single men residing, and two married men, with their wives and families, living temporarily on adjacent land. Improvements required, £903 5s. 4d.; effected, £3,114 16s. 6d.; surplus, £2,211 11s. 4d. Selectors steady, industrious, mostly experienced, and all striving to better their circumstances. Most of the selectors have a few acres cropped for home-consumption; the remainder of the land is utilised for grazing purposes, and is stocked with 67 horses, 30 cows, 221 other cattle, and 11,010 sheep. As all required to reside are residing, and seeing that improvements have been effected to the value of £2,211 11s. 4d. in excess of requirements, the progress made must be looked upon as satisfactory. The Mangapakeha school has been reopened, and is now well attended. Postal facilities are within easy reach of selectors. Access, coach and dray roads mostly metalled.