

APPENDICES.

APPENDIX I.—SETTLEMENT OF CROWN LANDS.

EXTRACTS FROM THE REPORTS OF THE COMMISSIONERS OF CROWN LANDS ON SETTLEMENT OPERATIONS DURING THE TWELVE MONTHS WHICH ENDED ON THE 31ST MARCH, 1911.

AUCKLAND.

THE SETTLEMENT OF CROWN LANDS.

THERE is no doubt that, although the energies of the Department are concentrated in placing on the market the maximum area available, it must be admitted there is no slackening in the demand. The applications received were largely in excess of those lodged during the previous year, and it is quite evident that any land of fair quality and moderately accessible is eagerly competed for. There are several prominent features to be noted in an analysis of applications. It is noticed that a very large proportion of the applicants hail from places in the Dominion outside the Auckland Land District, particularly from the South Island. The fact that the great bulk of the applicants are entirely landless is apparent, and also that a large percentage are single men who have been repeatedly unsuccessful in former ballots.

The presence of so many previously unsuccessful persons in the ballots has directed the attention of the Land Board to the desirability of seriously considering putting into operation the power in the Land Act giving preference to applicants of this class.

The Board's examination of applicants as to their *bona fides* appears to deter the entry of the class of applicant that has no genuine intention of settlement on the land, and there has been a check in a marked degree in what is known as "family dummyism."

To meet the pressing demand for land, there was available during the year an area of 119,930 acres. Of this area, 57,368 acres was offered under the optional system and the balance under various fixed tenures. Of these fixed tenures, pastoral runs and small grazing-runs absorbed 24,492 acres. This land is not capable of being worked in small areas, and its selection is therefore dependent upon men with sufficient capital to manage large runs.

There were thirty-one ballots conducted during the twelve months.

There can only be one opinion in regard to the conditions of settlement, and that is the absolute success achieved by the great majority of selectors. From all sources reports show that genuine settlers are well satisfied with their holdings, and are more than proving their *bona fides* by the very extensive improvements they are effecting, largely in excess of the value stipulated in the conditions of selection. Areas selected for settlement which are covered with standing bush are so obviously bad an investment whilst they remain in that condition that very great energy is to be observed in the clearing and grassing of bush lands.

In all agricultural and pastoral pursuits highly satisfactory results are reported. The season, on the whole, has been a prosperous one. A drought which occurred in some parts of the district did not prevent a record yield of butter: the wool-market maintained high prices, and there were excellent returns from white crops, with indications of a satisfactory demand. In some parts a serious failure in the turnip crop is reported. This is a matter of great concern, causing, as it has done, a rise in the price of meat.

Notwithstanding the natural increase in stock, and the additions to herds acquired to stock the greater area of grazing-land coming in, values have considerably increased, owing, it is said, to the limited number of beasts available for fattening purposes. This shortage, it is alleged, is due to the large extent to which the Jersey breed is being introduced to improve dairy herds.

In regard to dairying, the home separator has proved of incalculable benefit to the small farmer. Hitherto the settler whose means of transit was restricted to a packhorse was so severely handicapped as to make it impossible to deliver his milk to the creamery. The improvement of access is, of course, the burning question in the development of the country, and the conditions which prevail in regard to this very important matter must, and do, have a very marked effect upon the attitude which the Land Board adopts in dealing with settlers in regard to the fulfilment of their obligations. The desire for railway communication is again mentioned in the reports from some districts, whilst much satisfaction is expressed at the pushing-on of the railway in other parts.

There has been a marked decline in the gum industry, with the result that applications are being made to remove restrictions over areas reserved for digging, so that the land may be available for settlement. In cases where this has been done, fruit-farms, giving very satisfactory results, have been established. The land, however, requires good cultivation, abundance of artificial manures, and suitable grasses.

The flax industry is also at a standstill, operations being in most cases restricted to those who own the flax-areas.