

Waikari, Lake Ellesmere, and mid-Canterbury are well established. They suffered from the abnormal season like the rest, but benefited by quality and high prices obtainable, disadvantages thus being neutralized. Small areas of Crown land, useless as separate holdings, were disposed of by auction and realized satisfactory prices.

LAND LAWS AMENDMENT ACTS, 1912, 1913, and 1914.

There were no applications under the provisions of section 27, Land Laws Amendment Act, 1912, for an extension of licenses on account of loss of stock through heavy falls of snow.

Section 13, Land Laws Amendment Act, 1912, which provides for the postponement of rent, has not been taken so much advantage of this year as in the past, thirteen selectors only having taken advantage of this clause of the Act. There is no doubt that the administration of this clause is beneficial in a number of cases where a tenant is waiting payment for his crops, so enabling him to get the rebate on his rent.

During the year applications for revaluation of their holdings under section 13, Land Laws Amendment Act, 1913, were received from many selectors of the more recently acquired estates. These were duly forwarded to the Valuer-General, and in all cases the rents were reduced, and in some cases considerably reduced.

Before the war started the number of inquiries showed that a good many tenants intended to take advantage of purchasing their freeholds under these Acts, but they apparently found difficulty in finding the necessary capital. The applications since the war have been mostly confined to small sections in the vicinity of towns.

DEPARTMENTAL.

The total number of ordinary meetings of the Land Board was twelve, and there were two special meetings during the year.

All officers of the clerical staff have worked capably and efficiently during the past year.

OTAGO.

(ROBERT T. SADD, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The year ending the 31st March, 1915, has been characterized by the great inquiry and demand for land, especially for pastoral country suitable for sheep and areas suitable for fruit-farms. The demand for the former is being met by the subdivisions of pastoral runs as the licenses expire when the country is suitable, and for the latter by cutting up portions of pastoral runs in Central Otago which can be ploughed and irrigated.

Arrangements have been made with the licensee of the Earnsclough Run to relinquish over 7,000 acres, parts of which are very suitable for fruit-farms, after irrigation. During the year the Omarama Pastoral Runs, 182,900 acres, were subdivided into twelve subdivisions, for which there are many inquiries.

The Benmore Runs, containing over 300,000 acres, are also being subdivided for settlement in anticipation of the expiry of licenses in 1916; the survey of Puketoi Run, 21,360 acres, has been let by contract; the Galloway Runs, of 130,000 acres, are also under survey into pastoral runs and fruit-farms.

The provisional survey of several small estates purchased at Beaumont, containing about 5,000 acres, together with the Bellamy Runs, containing about 32,000 acres, has been completed, and these lands will be ready for ballot in May. The surveys of about 700 acres between Alexandra and Clyde have been completed by contract, in areas from 11 to 80 acres, for fruit-farms and general settlement.

The total area now held by 4,896 lessees from the Crown is 5,510,321 acres. The revenue received for the year just ended was £135,218, showing an increase of £5,109 over the previous year's receipts.

Generally speaking, the Crown tenants have had a good year, due to the good prices obtained for stock and farm-produce.

The winter, though not very severe, was a long cold one, and up to the end of November cold, windy weather was experienced. Matters improved somewhat by the end of December, but want of sufficient rain was against the growth of some of the crops, especially root crops, and the autumn growth has not been good through absence of sufficient moisture.

CONVERSIONS TO FREEHOLD.

During the year thirty-four tenants acquired the freehold of their sections, the area comprising 6,079 acres. The leaseholds so converted were made up as follows: Perpetual lease, 14; lease in perpetuity, 8; occupation with right of purchase, 4; lease in perpetuity (land for settlements), 3; village homestead on perpetual lease, 3; and deferred payment, 2.

REBATES OF RENT.

For prompt payment of rent, rebates amounting to £679 were granted to 701 tenants on Crown lands, £5,135 to 746 tenants on settlement lands, and £78 to 138 tenants on national-endowment lands.