

TARANAKI.

(G. H. BULLARD, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The total area of the five settlements in this district is only 5,331 acres. The sections are all occupied, chiefly for dairying purposes, and the rental arrears, I am glad to say, is small.

The whole of Spotswood Settlement has now been disposed of, and is held for homesteads. The prospects in the case of the five settlements are distinctly good, and in the case of the Tariki Settlement, the latest purchase, I am quite satisfied with the manner in which the settlers have developed their holdings and controlled the noxious weeds. In the case of Tokaora Settlement, the present-day value of the land is very much above the Crown values.

It is quite anticipated that a fairly large number of the lessees in these settlements will avail themselves of their freehold rights during the current year, especially under the easy time-payments offered by the deferred-payment system of purchase.

WELLINGTON.

(T. N. BRODRICK, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

Only one new settlement, the Falloon, was offered during the year. It is situated between eight and nine miles north-west of Masterton, and comprises six sections, having a total area of 1,031 acres. These were offered on the 18th December, 1914, and all were selected. Some of the selectors are already in occupation.

In the Poroporo and Heatherlea Settlements, disposed of in the previous year, the settlers have made substantial progress. The other rural settlements are in a satisfactory position, and where transfers have taken place the purchasers have paid substantial amounts for the goodwill of the leases.

NELSON.

(F. A. THOMPSON, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

There are three settlements in this district; two—namely, the Wangapeka and Braeburn—are in a most satisfactory condition, and with few exceptions the settlers are well satisfied with their holdings. The crops and stock have done well during the past year; in fact, the former better than in any other part of the district, whilst the latter topped the market at the local stock sales.

The Lake Settlement has just been offered, therefore nothing of any notice can be reported.

MARLBOROUGH.

(H. G. PRICE, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

Only one new settlement—the Wither—has been acquired during the year, the ballot for which takes place on the 13th April, and I anticipate a fair demand for the sections.

The settlers on Hillersden and Lynton Downs Settlements—that were acquired last year—have been handicapped by the phenomenally dry season that we have experienced; old residents say there has been nothing like it for forty years; but in spite of this, the settlers are hopeful, and should with an ordinary season make satisfactory progress. The settlers on the old-established settlements are all doing fairly well.

WESTLAND.

(H. D. M. HASZARD, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

There are only two settlements in this district, both of which were acquired some years ago. Good progress has been made by the whole of the lessees, and the establishment of dairy factories has resulted in very material increases in the unimproved values; but, notwithstanding large goodwill offering, no sales whatever have taken place during the year. At the time of purchase of these estates only parts of the areas had been cleared, but practically the whole of the bush has now been felled, and more cultivation is being done. Although the growth of grass has been very good, the wet season has had the effect of decreasing the milk-yield, but this shortage will be made good by the enhanced prices ruling for butter.

CANTERBURY.

(C. R. POLLEN, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

Four new settlements were opened for selection under renewable-lease tenure during the year, as follows: Hillboro', three sections; Copland, two sections; Teschemaker, thirteen sections; Finlay Downs, five sections. All were disposed of.

All the settlements acquired previous to 1910 show steady progress, and their prosperity is assured. It was noticed when making cursory inspections during the year that the houses, buildings, yards, &c., were continually being augmented and kept up in good condition.