

The crops were lighter than usual, owing to a dry spring, but quality and unusual high prices made up for deficiency in quantity.

Cropping restrictions were suspended, but very little overstepping of the conditions was apparent.

The reports on some of the recently acquired estates, the soil of which is of a light character, did not indicate such a satisfactory state of affairs. The unusual dryness of the spring and autumn months acted disastrously on these lands, which the porous nature of the soil renders susceptible to climatic influence. Improvements on these estates were not in all cases quite up to legal requirements, the greater part of the permanent additions being in the direction of those promising immediate profit.

The lands in the upper Ashley are being subdivided for disposal, the road giving access via the Ashley Gorge having been completed.

Residence conditions were well complied with. (The remarks made with regard to the Land Laws Amendment Acts, 1912, 1913, and 1914, in Appendix I, apply to these lands.)

OTAGO.

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

During the spring and summer the past season in Otago was very dry, and in consequence some of the crops in the district were very poor, especially root crops. Feed was also scarce; but owing to the high prices obtaining for stock and crops the bulk of the settlers are fairly prosperous. In northern Otago fairly good crops have been successfully harvested, consisting chiefly of wheat and oats, and owing to the high prices occasioned by the war the fortunate growers are making very large profits. Unfortunately, the area under crop is not nearly so large as it should be.

During the year one new settlement (Waitahuna, 4,035 acres) was opened for selection, in ten holdings, which were all selected at the ballot or immediately afterwards.

The Otanomomo Settlement is now doing better, and some more sections have been taken, and the balance are being reoffered at a reduced valuation; several settlers made application for a revaluation, and this has greatly reduced the price. Boring operations are being prosecuted on the settlement to try to obtain a better water-supply. The settlers are forming a co-operative company to start their own butter-factory.

The older-established settlements are on a sound basis and most of the settlers are doing well. The high prices obtainable for all classes of farm-produce, owing to the war, will go a long way towards putting all these settlers in a good sound position.

SOUTHLAND.

(G. H. M. McCURE, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

There are now twelve settlements in this district, the area under lease being 69,521 acres held by 298 lessees. During the year thirteen lessees took advantage of the legislation of recent years and purchased the freehold. The area thus acquired was 3,824 acres, and the amount received £9,501.

No new settlements were acquired during the past twelve months, but the remaining sections in Fortification Hill, Knowsley Park, and Waiarikiki Settlements were selected during the year. The remaining sections in the Ardlussa Settlement are being readvertised, and will be opened shortly. Altogether the settlements have been very successful, and the tenants continue to make satisfactory progress. It is instructive to note that the total improvements effected exceed the value of those required by £67,508.

APPENDIX III.—REPORT ON SAND-DUNE RECLAMATION.

[By E. PHILLIPS TURNER, F.R.G.S., Inspector.]

RUN 24, RANGITIKEL.

In the spring of 1913 a contract to plant with marram a belt of 6 chains wide and 210 chains (126 acres) along the coast was entered into with Mr. James McKelvie, the lessee of this run. The bunches of marram were to be set 2 ft. apart (10,900 to the acre), and the price per acre £3, or a total of £378. Owing to dry weather starting early only 50 chains were done the first year. Last winter Mr. McKelvie resumed operations, but owing to the extreme difficulty he had in getting men to stick at this kind of work he threw up the contract in the spring, after completing 154 chains (92½ acres) of the original contract of 210 chains. Though Mr. McKelvie had the advantage of having carts and horses near the ground and a foreman who has had many years' experience with planting marram, yet he states that the planting cost him £6 per acre, and that he has lost heavily on the work. The sand in this locality is of a very light nature, and a very slight wind moves it, and this with other disagreeable factors connected with living on the dunes causes men to throw up the work after two or three days' experience. Though up to the middle of spring the marram that was planted looked as though it had taken well, the abnormal drought, accompanied by constant high westerly winds in the summer, caused such a continuous movement of the sand that quite two-thirds of the total marram planted