

satisfactory. Many holdings the development of which had not proceeded far when the war broke out have unfortunately gone back to a very serious extent during the absence of the holders at the front, and the rehabilitation of these holdings will prove a severe task to the returning settlers. It is regrettable that instances are not wanting in which the interests of those who went to the front have not been looked after as they should have been by those placed in trust.

Educational Endowments.—The total area of primary and secondary education endowments in the district at the close of the year was 126,374 acres, out of which 81,548 acres was occupied by 744 lessees, paying a rental of £6,885 per annum. Fresh leases comprising 2,068 acres were taken up during the year, and renewals were arranged in twenty-six cases at a substantial increase on the rents previously paid.

General.—As the whole of the northern portion of the district has been constituted a separate land district as from the 1st April, 1919, this is the last report to be furnished in respect of the Auckland Land District as hitherto constituted. With the dissolution of the Land Board the work of land-settlement loses the help of Mr. James Trounson, a very old pioneer of settlement in the north, whose sincere desire for the welfare of the settlers and whose unobtrusive assistance in many ways will be remembered with gratitude by many of the older settlers, while his honesty and straightforwardness of purpose commanded respect and made his name known throughout the district. His efforts, equally with those of the other members of the Board, have been directed towards the promotion of the best interests of Crown-land settlement; and, while the Board has often been blamed for not placing lands more freely on the market, that very fact has helped to preserve for present and future requirements portions of the Crown estate which otherwise would long ago have passed into private hands, perhaps not with the best results. Thus the Board has been enabled to hand over to the new Board of the northern district a very substantial area of Crown land surveyed and ready to be placed on the market for those now seeking land.

The work of dealing with the settlement of discharged soldiers, especially during the later part of the year, has been very heavy, and this, coupled with the extra work involved in preparation for the division of the district, has taxed the full energy of the staff, which has responded well to the emergency. I desire to express my appreciation and thanks for their efforts.

HAWKE'S BAY.

(W. F. MARSH, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The past year has furnished a variety of climatic changes in Hawke's Bay, a dry winter succeeding a dry autumn, giving place to a wet spring and summer, followed by an excessively dry, hot spell, which at the moment of writing is causing the utmost consternation among the grazing and farming communities. The shortage in shipping-space has caused a glut in the freezing-works, and fears are held that unless the unexpected happens there will be insufficient pasture to carry the large surplus of sheep in the district, and by some the future is painted in very gloomy colours.

In spite of all this there is no apparent abatement of the wave of prosperity, and temporary derangements are optimistically borne because of the assured demand of our products at good prices for the next two or three years.

Land keeps soaring in value, and, although high prices for stock are usually concurrent with high values in land, the possibility of being able to buy cheaply in a fallen stock-market has led many shrewd judges to buy lands at a risen price, so it is difficult to ascribe a rule for land-valuation.

There has been a constant demand all through the year for Crown leases, due in a great measure, of course, to the restriction of the disposal of Crown lands by selection to all but discharged soldiers, and transfers were much in excess of last year's figures. The goodwill obtained for sections selected within the last six years were in some cases remarkably high, particularly in regard to dairying lands, and in such instances it is to be devoutly hoped that the confidence placed by many small settlers in the capability of the "rural divinity" to pay rent, taxes, interest, and income may not be misplaced.

The bulk of land transactions are at present confined to the southern part of the district, and are accounted for by the better road and railway access; but a gradual development is taking place between Napier and Wairoa, and the construction of the Napier-Gisborne Railway and one good arterial north road will assuredly result in the settlement of a portion of the district which, though not first class, enjoys a good rainfall, and possesses a large amount of easy ploughable country which should respond readily to the plough and manures.

It is somewhat difficult to acquire suitable lands for settlement in the Gisborne district, due principally to the fact that the country is wonderfully adapted for grazing, and even comparatively limited areas run into values much beyond the average price at which it is thought advisable to place upon Crown lands for selection.

A great volume of business has been transacted during the year, and the gross revenue has again been a record.

TARANAKI.

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

During the last year the progress of both the northern and southern ends of the district suffered a check through the unusual severity of the winter. This coming after a number of mild seasons found farmers unprepared, and the scarcity of feed caused by the unexpected frost and snow was responsible for the death of thousands of dairy cows throughout the district. Some