

EXTRACTS FROM REPORTS OF COMMISSIONERS OF CROWN LANDS.

AUCKLAND.

(H. M. SKEET, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The only new settlements opened during the year have been offered exclusively for discharged soldiers, and will be dealt with in that report.

The total number of tenants in the settlements at the end of the year was 901, occupying 145,476 acres, and paying a rental of £31,989 per annum. The freehold of 560 holdings containing 89,199 acres had been completely acquired, the purchase-money paid totalling £178,653.

The condition of the tenants in most of the old-established settlements has been one of considerable prosperity, due mainly to the position of the dairying industry, in which the majority are engaged. Recent developments in the industry have led in some localities to what can only appear as speculation based on an assumption of continued high prices for products. An undesirable feature in connection with this is the frequency with which properties change hands, the result being that instead of farming the land steadily to the best advantage it is either maintained merely at an average production pending resale at the earliest opportunity, or "nursed" with the same object of extracting a record price at the next sale. Such operations are good neither for the farmer nor the holding itself.

In a few cases the tenants are still struggling under disabilities caused by absence of labour and high prices of necessary supplies for improvements.

The small suburban settlements in the neighbourhood of Auckland are now very largely freehold, the proportion of tenures in the seven blocks being—freehold, 129; leasehold, 82. They continue to serve a useful purpose in the settlement of the outlying suburban area, although their development has been restricted by the recent conditions of the suburban services.

HAWKE'S BAY.

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

No new estates under this heading have been opened for settlement during the year, but the existing ones have been sharing very materially in the general prosperity of the district, and the same success which characterized the earlier purchases has continued to the most recent ones.

The right of conversion to freehold of lease-in-perpetuity sections under the Land for Settlements Act expired in November, 1918, and for the whole of the period of five years during which the right was in force about 30 per cent. of the settlers under this tenure availed themselves of the privilege.

TARANAKI.

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

All the estates acquired prior to the war are in a prosperous condition.

WELLINGTON.

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

Two small estates were acquired for the purposes of the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act, and were disposed of as follows: Pukenu Extension, five allotments, 508 acres; and Makowai Extension, three allotments, 284 acres. They comprise dairying and fattening country, and the settlers are doing well on their holdings.

It is anticipated that in the Putorino Settlement, mentioned in my previous report, the permanent gravitation water-supply will be installed in time for the coming dairy season.

Owing to difficulty in procuring suitable labour and the high cost of materials, no progress has been made with the street-construction work in the Hall-Jones Settlement, Lower Hutt.

Preparations are being made for offering sixteen allotments in the Waddington Settlement, just outside the borough above mentioned, in areas from 1 acre 1 rood 35 perches to 10 acres 1 rood 30 perches, three sections there having already been allotted. These small areas are suitable for market-gardens and occupation by partially disabled men.

The settlements established in previous years continue to prosper, and the more recent purchases now in occupation of discharged soldiers are likewise being gradually brought into a satisfactory and payable condition.

NELSON.

(H. D. McKELLAR, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The number of settlements in this district is five, two of which have been purchased, as isolated sections, for returned soldiers under section 3 of the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Amendment Act, 1917. As these lands have just been acquired it is too early yet to make any report on them.

Of the other three estates, Braeburn and Wangapeka were acquired some years ago, and are now well established. The principal sources of income are dairying and sheep and cattle raising, and the settlers appear to be in a prosperous condition.