

containing 1,954 acres, was opened in six holdings. Sections in this block were keenly sought after, and the six successful applicants have made a good start. Neville Settlement: This property was acquired and allotted to three brothers as tenants in common. These settlers should do well.

*Established Settlements.*—Wither Settlement: Sections in this settlement (with one exception) are small holdings for workmen employed as casual labourers in and around the district. So far the demand for these small lots has not been great, the result being that several are still available for selection. Of the four selectors one has forfeited his lease, two are making fair progress, and it is doubtful whether the other will retain his holding. Steps are now being taken to reoffer the large section grouped with some of the small lots. This would make a good holding for a man of the right stamp.

Erina Settlement: This settlement contains eleven soldiers' sections. Ten of the settlers are in occupation, and are making fair progress notwithstanding their complaint that the land is too dear. This is borne out by the fact that two of the settlers have recently purchased motor-cars. Generally speaking, the position of the settlement may be regarded as satisfactory.

Warnock Settlement: This settlement contains one settler, whose prospects are good.

*Crown-land Sections.*—Upper Opouri Block: The selectors of these lands are making very good progress, and there is no doubt whatever about their ultimate success. It is to be regretted that there is not more of this bush land available for disposal.

*Advances under the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Amendment Act, 1917.*—The provisions of this Act have been fully appreciated, and applications for advances have been numerous.

*General.*—The settlement of soldiers in the district may be considered satisfactory, but many returned men with farming experience and capital have no land, and there seems to be little prospect of securing land to meet their needs owing to the exorbitant prices asked by the large landholders.

#### WESTLAND.

(R. S. GALBRAITH, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

A number of properties were offered to the Department for discharged soldiers during the past twelve months, but, although these were all inspected and reported on, in some cases the prices asked were considered excessive, while in others the properties were found to be unsuitable for subdivision, consequently no purchases were made.

There are now some seventy-two discharged soldiers settled on land in Westland. Nineteen selected Crown lands, and fifty-three acquired farms with the assistance of advances from the Department under section 2 of the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Amendment Act, 1917. Most of them are a very good stamp of men, are industriously improving their holdings, and have met all their liabilities to date. One or two are finding it difficult to carry on. I think, however, if they can weather the first year or two they are men who will certainly make good. Besides the above, twenty-five have purchased dwellings with advances from the Department, chiefly in Greymouth and Hokitika.

With the exception of two or three of the first applicants, the whole of these soldiers have been settled within the past year, and it is therefore somewhat early to judge as to their ultimate success, especially those who have only quite recently been in possession, but, generally speaking, they are satisfied with their propositions. There is every prospect that they will make good and when they get over the initial difficulties should be in very good positions and do well.

#### CANTERBURY.

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

The settlement of soldiers on the land in the Canterbury District during the past year has been proceeding apace, both on the leasehold and freehold systems. During the year a very considerable number of these farms and settlements have been visited and inspected, and I am of opinion that, given anything like favourable seasons and reasonable markets, the great majority of the soldier settlers will make a success of their undertaking and be able to fulfil their obligations.

Most of them appear to be hardworking and industrious young men anxious to get on, and it is apparent that a large proportion of them are practical farmers with considerable past experience. A number of the farmers have married since taking up their sections, but owing to present timber shortage are finding a difficulty in getting homes.

The past season throughout this province has been a very favourable one, and excellent results have been obtained all round, many of the soldier settlers having received substantial cheques for their produce. Those men who have gone in for dairying, however, are finding it a very difficult problem to secure good dairy cattle at anything like reasonable prices.

The high cost of all implements and building and fencing material also presses very hard on our soldier settlers, and I would suggest that this Department might very well approach implement-makers, hardware and timber merchants, and see if something cannot be done to obtain these goods for the soldiers on more favourable terms.

During the year twenty-three estates were acquired in this district for soldier settlement, comprising an area of 29,530 acres, the price paid for which was £454,955.

The area of the pastoral runs subdivided and allocated to discharged soldiers during the year was 154,537 acres, comprising twelve allotments.

Twenty-one new settlements, comprising 115 allotments and a total area of 172,800 acres, were opened for selection by discharged soldiers during the year, and with the exception of one or two unimportant lots, all were taken up.