

An area of 224 acres 1 rood 37 perches forest land in Pencarrow and Belmont Survey Districts, at the back of Eastbourne Borough, was exchanged for 16 acres 1 rood 28 perches of Crown land near Ohakune, the former area being set apart for a public recreation-ground.

The lease of an area of 35 acres near Awapuni, Palmerston North, expired, and was subdivided into six allotments for lease by discharged soldiers.

The education reserves in this district maintain a satisfactory condition, and where the lessees are not entitled to a perpetual renewal upon expiry the suitability or otherwise of the land for subdivision is closely inquired into.

In the North Waimarino Improved-farm Settlement five settlers obtained their licenses, and there are now only four holding their sections under agreement. One settler received advances of £142 towards building a dwelling and felling bush.

The Land Board held twelve ordinary meetings, and its sittings extended over thirty-seven days—the total number of items dealt with being 4,388. Two special meetings were held to conduct ballots for land set apart under the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act. Amongst other business the Board dealt with 536 transfers and subleases and 2,544 applications from discharged soldiers for purchase of dwellings and farms.

MARLBOROUGH.

(H. J. Lowe, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

General.—The drought experienced during the early part of 1919 continued well into the winter, which, fortunately for the stock, was one of the mildest on record. Although there was a severe flood over the whole district in September, by which considerable damage was done, especially in the southern portions, the dry spell practically lasted until the end of the year, since when many beneficial rains have occurred, making the pastoral lands look better than for many years past, thereby encouraging the landowners to still further increase their demands for high prices, and incidentally tending to raise the local price of stock, which now through the whole district looks remarkably well. The unusually heavy rains in January and February had a bad effect upon the seed crops, for which Marlborough is noted, enabling the lucky ones, however, to reap abnormal profits. Owing to flood mentioned above there is still necessity for the construction of further groynes for protection of bridge approaches and settlers' homestead flats, more especially upon the Clarence and Hapuka Rivers.

Cropping.—I regret to say that very little wheat was grown, the settlers finding it far more profitable to grow oats and barley, which realized high prices. The pea crop was well up to the average, and oats and barley yielded well. Many settlers were enabled to reap as many as five crops of hay off their lucerne-paddocks, but, as mentioned above, the lucerne-seed crop was a failure.

Dairying Industry.—This industry continues to grow and command good prices, but the drought of last season sent the herds in the winter so poor that they did not recover until the end of the year. They are now, however, in good form, and bid fair to be very profitable next season.

Pastoral Runs.—Two pastoral runs, containing 90,000 acres, were auctioned during the year, while another was renewed in three parts.

Small Grazing-runs.—Twelve small grazing-runs in the Kaikoura district, and three in the Wairau district, were reassessed and relet to the original lessees, the rent in one case being finally fixed by arbitration.

Education Endowments.—There is no demand for leases of a few town sections, but most of these have now been let temporarily from year to year. All the areas suitable for farming are held under permanent leases.

Land Board.—The Land Board held twelve ordinary meetings and also special meetings. The business, owing to soldier settlement and a keen desire to transfer holdings, about trebled, meetings usually lasting two days, instead of barely one as heretofore. To further assist the Board a Superintendent of Soldier Settlements was appointed for the combined Marlborough-Nelson District. The terms of Messrs. A. McCallum and J. Boyd expired, and both were reappointed. The only Crown lands available for opening are three sections situated in the Opouri, Tinline, and Wakamarina Valleys, and one in the Wither Settlement; but in the early part of the coming season we hope to ballot for and settle the Moorlands, Alberton, Neville, Linkwaterdale, and Goat Hills Blocks, and other estates now under offer or to be offered.

Flax Industry.—This industry still continues to flourish in a small way.

Mining Industry.—Very little has been done during the year, but work is still continued at the scheelite-mine in Upper Wakamarina Valley. There are also several gold ventures in the Upper Wairau Valley, while a coal-mine is again being sought for in Picton.

Lime-works.—Lime-works have been previously established near Ward and Kaikoura, while another is proposed at Wharanui. The one at Ward is still working, but the Kaikoura one is shut down temporarily owing to prohibitive freight charges and cost of labour. The completion of the railway should assist these ventures.

NELSON.

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

General.—The outstanding feature of the past year's operations was the abnormal number of applications received for advances to purchase stock and improved land by discharged soldiers, particulars of which are noted under a special heading further on. Transactions, however, connected