

to discriminate between leasehold and freehold tenures, and prices are asked and obtained for leasehold without any consideration of the Crown's interest in the land or of the rent or the terms of the lease, almost any leasehold tenure being dealt with and looked upon as though the land were freehold. This often caused disappointment to applicants for advances.

As a whole the district is steadily progressing, and at the present high prices for produce of all kinds the farmers have a bright outlook. A large amount of foreign capital is being brought into the district by gold-mining syndicates. One in particular from America intends spending very considerable amounts in machinery, &c., principally for dredging on the Rimu Flat, near Hokitika. I understand dredges are to be worked by electricity generated by water-power. The demand for timber is also giving increased prosperity.

CANTERBURY.

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

Conditions and Progress of Settlement.—During the past year the progress of settlement in the district has been confined almost entirely to placing returned soldiers on the land, either by ballot for leasehold land or by advances to enable them to purchase properties selected by themselves.

The year has been a favourable one for the farmer. Cereals of all sorts were particularly good, and rape and turnips better than they have been for years. The long severe winter caused considerable anxiety to farmers, and it was well into summer before stock recovered from the effects, but the summer and autumn having been most favourable for grain, roots, and pasture, the successful wintering of stock is assured for this year.

Number of Tenants, &c.—The total number of Crown tenants on the books on the 31st March, 1920, was 3,945, occupying an area of 4,215,153 acres, and paying a rental of £270,891 per annum. The total revenue received was £315,912, being £48,844 in excess of the amount for the previous year.

Freehold Tenure.—During the year thirty-one selections, comprising 3,178 acres, were alienated under freehold tenure. In addition to these, deferred-payment licenses were issued over eight holdings, comprising 7,028 acres.

Education Reserves.—The total area of primary and secondary endowments in the district at the close of the year was 71,205 acres, which was occupied by 231 lessees, paying a rental of £28,225 per annum.

General.—The business dealt with by the Land Board during the year, principally in connection with the settlement of soldiers upon the land, has been very heavy, and the thanks of the Department are due to the members for their untiring services. The Board held twenty-eight meetings, sitting altogether sixty-five days, which constitutes a record; and, as I am also Chairman *ex officio* of six other Boards, my time has been very fully occupied, and it is difficult to keep pace with the ordinary administration of a large district.

There were 545 applications to transfer dealt with, of which twenty-seven were refused.

The Board dealt with 2,247 applications under section 2, Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act, 1917, the amount applied for being £2,573,640, over an area of approximately 147,485 acres. The actual amount recommended by the Board was £1,877,018.

OTAGO.

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

The outstanding features of the land administration has been the settlement of discharged soldiers on the land—in fact, all new work has been of this description. Practically no land has been made available for the general public except some small areas not sufficient for a living for a discharged soldier; the only operations in general administration have therefore been the transfer of Crown leases.

Taking Otago as a whole, the past season cannot be said to have been good. The Catlin's district has fared better than most parts. There the root crops have been good, and this remark applies also to grass. Very little cereal cropping is done in this locality. Around Heriot the cereal and root crops alike have been very fair and quite up to the average production of this fertile portion of Otago. In Central Otago the season has been unfavourable. In North Otago the cereal crops have ranged from fair to very good, while the root crops have been poor.

Stock generally has maintained a high market price. Farmers' requisites—implements, fencing and building material—have been very dear, and there is no apparent sign of prices coming down. Working-horses, too, are at a very high price at present, the day when these can be displaced by machinery not having arrived yet. The three products, oats, chaff, and barley especially, have commanded very remunerative prices, and settlers who have had good crops have done very well.

Through pressure of work connected with settlement of discharged soldiers the Rangers have not been able to make their periodical inspections of ordinary and settlement holdings, but as very few complaints have been received it may be assumed that tenants generally are well satisfied with their holdings and prospects.

I wish to express my appreciation of the loyal and zealous assistance I have received from my staff throughout a year that has been particularly strenuous.