

SESSION II.
1921.
NEW ZEALAND.

DEPARTMENT OF LANDS AND SURVEY:
DRAINAGE OPERATIONS IN HAURAKI PLAINS.

REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH, 1921, TOGETHER WITH STATEMENT
OF ACCOUNTS.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly pursuant to Section 10 of the Hauraki Plains Act, 1908.

SIR,—

Department of Lands and Survey, Wellington, 10th June, 1921.

I have the honour to submit herewith the report on the drainage operations in the Hauraki Plains for the past year, in accordance with the provisions of the Hauraki Plains Act, 1908.

The total area thrown open for selection in previous years was 40,391 acres, valued at £281,950. During the past year the area was 1,775 acres, valued at £25,680, whilst it is hoped that 4,500 acres, valued at £60,000, will be opened.

The detailed report of the Chief Drainage Engineer is attached, together with a statement of accounts and balance-sheet. These disclose a very satisfactory state of affairs, and show that the reclamation of the old Piako Swamp by the State has been more than justified.

I have, &c.,

T. N. BRODRICK, Under-Secretary.

The Hon. D. H. Guthrie, Minister of Lands.

REPORT OF CHIEF DRAINAGE ENGINEER.

SIR,—

I have the honour to submit the annual report on the operations carried out on the Hauraki Plains in connection with the land-drainage scheme for the year ended 31st March, 1921. It will be noticed by the detailed schedule that a very large amount of work has been accomplished during the year.

The value of the stock-sales held at Ngatea, Waitakaruru, and Patetonga yards was £79,496. The cheese-production for the three factories on the plains amount to 1,745,252 lb., while the butter produced at Kopu Factory totalled 1,420,879 lb. A very important acquisition to the plains is an up-to-date butter-factory, which was constructed at Ngatea during the past year.

The amount of tonnage carried to the Piako River by the two steamship companies trading direct to Auckland was approximately 6,560 tons, in addition to which the trade between Thames and the plains comprised some 741 tons of general cargo, 284,000 superficial feet of timber, and 12,000 bricks.

With the advent of the new types of machinery lately acquired in America it will be possible to greatly expedite development of the undrained area. Much of the present expenditure will not come to profit for some time, this being obviously unavoidable, as it is quite impossible and impracticable to unduly force swamp areas of this nature. The principle of "cut-and-come" system is well recognized by those who have to deal with swamp lands so wet and deep as those of Hauraki. After viewing similar lands in America, the results achieved at Hauraki are very satisfying, and the conclusion is formed that Hauraki cannot be beaten for fertility and productiveness. Nothing was seen to equal the alluvial area of Hauraki.

Time is the essence of successful drainage of deep swamp areas, and it would not be out of place here to refer to the many doubts expressed by certain laymen some years back as to the wisdom and practicability of undertaking this project. These doubts have been thoroughly exploded. It was realized that this area would have to be nursed and coaxed if the settlers were to make good, and that our operations would have to cover all the functions of a local authority as regards public utilities. The provisions of the Hauraki Plains Act did not provide for the metalling of roads, it being considered that special-rating areas would cover this matter. Although up to last year Hauraki Plains formed portions of two counties, yet no county funds were expended therein. It was recognized that without metal or gravel roads the settlers could not possibly succeed, and direct assistance by way of grants has resulted in the metalling of forty-eight miles of roadway in the