

TARANAKI.

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

Lands available under sections 3 and 4 of the Discharged Soldiers Act total 11,270 acres, the number of holdings being forty-eight.

The applications received for the year were 249, made up of eight under section 3 and 241 under section 4 of the 1915 Act. The lands allotted during the year were eight under the deferred-payment conditions and ninety under lease or license, the total area being 21,018 acres. The total lands acquired from the Crown by discharged soldiers and held under deferred payment, cash, or license at the 31st March, 1921, totalled 403, with a total acreage of 146,031 acres.

Some 550 soldiers have been assisted to acquire lands or to discharge mortgages over land they already hold, 470 were granted assistance to acquire or erect buildings, and 480 were advanced money to purchase stock or do improvements.

WELLINGTON.

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

Two estates, aggregating 1,017 acres, which were acquired under the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act, 1915, during the year have been subdivided into sixteen dairy farms, and they will be offered in May and June of this year.

Twenty-one sections, comprising estates acquired during previous years, containing a total area of 10,841 acres, were balloted for amongst 156 applicants, two being dairy farms and nineteen sheep-farms.

An education reserve lying between Palmerston North and Longburn, comprising 34 acres, was subdivided into six sections for workers, who thus could supplement their earnings by dairying in a small way. There were twenty-two applicants for these sections.

An area of 6,227 acres, consisting of forest-clad Crown lands where the timber had no marketable value, and milled-out sawmill areas, was subdivided into twenty-four sections and taken up, there being 179 applicants. Ten of these sections, in the vicinity of Owango and Ohakune, will be suitable for dairying when the bush has been felled and the land grassed.

Twenty-four estates, comprising 17,543 acres, were acquired under section 3 of the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Amendment Act, 1917; of these, twenty-two, comprising 16,234 acres, were subdivided and allotted to eighty-six applicants, and six, of an area of 16,738 acres, acquired during the previous year, were allotted to forty-one applicants. The twelve applicants for the two remaining properties will take possession of their holdings in April and May of this year. Eighty-four of the holdings under this section will be dairy-farms, thirty-six will carry sheep, and the remaining seven will be used for mixed farming.

Under the provisions of section 2 of the 1917 Act, 195 persons have received financial assistance to purchase farms or discharge mortgages thereon, the area comprised being 21,988 acres; and 769 persons have been assisted to purchase or erect dwellings, the total number so assisted to date being 770 for farm properties, of an area of 110,711 acres, and 2,096 for purchase or erection of dwellings.

Eighteen allotments, comprising 1,759 acres, were surrendered and reallocated, but two of these were amalgamated with adjoining holdings.

In the bush districts in the Retaruke, Whirinaki, Kaitieke, Hunua, Manganui, and Makotuku Survey Districts, situate in the most northern part of this land district, there are 106 settlers that have made selections during the past five years, and as an indication of their progress they have an area of 16,363 acres in grass, and other improvements, such as fencing and buildings, making a total value of £98,710. The whole of the country that has been put into grass is well stocked with sheep and cattle, and in some instances the settlers have commenced dairying operations. The prospects of these settlers were undoubtedly bright, but, owing to the extreme drop in the value of sheep and cattle and the price of wool, they will not in the near future obtain the returns that were expected.

There are 741 settlers engaged in dairy-farming, and owing to the remunerative price that has been paid this season for butterfat the bulk of the dairy-farmers have had good returns, although the season was not too favourable for dairy operations, due to the wet spring and very dry summer and autumn.

It is doubtful if the same price for butterfat will be paid next season; but, even if there should be a reduction, I am of the opinion that most of the men who have been settled under the main Act and section 3 of the Amendment Act of 1917 will do quite well. I cannot, however, say this as regards some of the men who have selected farms under section 2 of the latter Act.

As to the men whose farms are wholly devoted to carrying sheep and cattle, they have had anything but a prosperous year, owing to the unforeseen and unprecedented fall in the values of sheep, cattle, and wool, and their prospects for the ensuing year, so far as present values are concerned, are far from encouraging.

Since the inception of the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act and up to the 31st March, 1921, 1,495 discharged soldiers have either been settled on farms or have been assisted to buy farms, the total area involved being 293,352 acres; in addition to this 2,096 discharged men have been assisted to purchase or build dwellings, making a total number of 3,591 men who have been assisted, at a total cost of £5,322,338.