

The local fruit-preserving and jam factory reports a very satisfactory season, with good prices to the suppliers. A smaller factory on co-operative lines has also been started in the interests of some of the tomato-growers.

The apple industry is showing improvement, and the first of this season's shipment which arrived in London at the close of the year under review realized satisfactory prices. This year, owing to better shipping facilities, reduced freights, and cheaper cases, the total number of cases shipped for the Home market was much in excess of last year's amount, and the prospects of the apple industry appear much brighter. Well-established growers naturally receive the most benefit. Soldier fruit-farmers have in many cases a very small margin to work on, and are finding a difficulty in meeting their obligations. They require careful supervision, and the probable success of some is doubtful. Small-fruit growers and market-gardeners are obtaining satisfactory prices. Hop crops are good and profitable.

The closing-up of the cement-works at Tarakohe was a blow to the surrounding district, as they gave employment to a large number of men. It is hoped that before long the plant will be in operation again.

Another industry, of great interest to the whole Dominion, is the Onakaka Ironworks, situated between Collingwood and Takaka, in the midst of an extensive field of ore, with deep-water shipping facilities. A trial run of the plant and furnaces will be made shortly, and it is anticipated that the works will be in full swing before the winter.

Tobacco-culture is receiving attention in some localities, and is reported as successful and profitable.

Generally the district is progressing notwithstanding the financial depression and the low prices ruling.

Lands opened for Selection.—During the year, following the decision that all lands open for discharged soldiers only and remaining unselected were to be thrown open for general application, the Matakita Settlement (6,980 acres, in eight holdings) and the Maruia Settlement (8,114 acres, in thirteen holdings) were made available; also the remaining seven holdings in Tutaki Settlement, and a number of scattered sections in various parts of the district. The prevailing depression and low prices for wool and stock, however, militated against settlement, and few applications were received. Apparently little demand for land may be expected until conditions again become normal with better prospects of payable returns.

Freeholds.—Nineteen ordinary Crown lessees acquired the freehold of their sections.

Land Board.—The Board suffered a severe loss owing to the death of Mr. Joseph Brown, of Murchison, on the 23rd June, 1921. He was a conscientious member, keen to see justice done to every one who had business dealings with the Board, and his death was deeply regretted. The vacancy was filled by the appointment of Mr. Robert Win, of Kawatiri. Mr. W. C. Baigent's term of office as a member of the Board expired on the 6th March, 1922, and he was succeeded by Mr. George Macmahon, of Stoke. Twelve ordinary monthly meetings of the Land Board were held. Applications for concessions from soldier settlers and ordinary settlers were numerous, owing to the financial depression and fall in prices for stock, wool, and farm-produce, and in the latter part of the year the dairy-farmer also suffered by the collapse of the butter-market. All the applications received careful and sympathetic consideration after investigation. A large amount of routine business was despatched at each meeting.

Revenue and Arrears.—The gross revenue for the year totalled £70,314. Although these figures show a considerable decrease over last year's receipts, it was nevertheless anticipated that this year's revenue would not reach the amount collected last year, as conditions prevailing in the various markets militated against Crown tenants being able to meet all their obligations. The revenue, however, exceeds the estimate by about £8,000. The gross revenue quoted above includes approximately £41,000 collected from discharged soldiers who have been assisted by the Department. The rent in arrear totals £4,034. A considerable sum is also owing by discharged soldiers for interest and instalment. The large amount of rent and interest outstanding is undoubtedly due to the fact that both ordinary settlers and discharged-soldier settlers have been adversely affected by the abnormally low prices ruling for wool, stock, and dairy-produce during the year under review. It is evident, however, that the markets are brightening, and with better prices for produce, &c., there is every reason to believe that the arrears will be materially reduced.

Land remaining for Future Selection.—The land remaining for future disposal and not yet opened for selection consists generally of remote, inaccessible areas difficult to road, for which there is no demand at the present time.

Education Endowments.—A number of education reserves were offered for lease during the year, but there was little demand. Some difficulty was experienced with regard to renewals of expired leases of reserves in the Town of Westport. Expired leases over reserves in other parts of the district were renewed at satisfactory rentals.

WESTLAND.

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

Conditions and Progress of Settlement.—For the year ended 31st March, 1922, the weather conditions in Westland were on the whole fairly good from a farming point of view. The winter was mild, and the spring and summer warm, so that there has been abundance of grass throughout the district. Except by farmers for their own use for winter feed, &c., very little cropping is done