

comprising land suited mostly for grazing, and two smaller sections suited for dairying and fattening. The Tapatu Block, of 6,047 acres, in eight sections, situated in the northerly portion of Hawke's Bay, in the vicinity of Hicks Bay and Te Araroa—all bush land for grazing. The Waipiro lands, about 7,770 acres, in nine sections, situated in Waiapu County, close to Waipiro Bay and Tokomaru—generally open land with light bush and scrub, suited for grazing. The Tahora Block, of about 18,603 acres, in seven sections, situated near Motu—heavy bush country in large areas, suited for grazing only when cleared and grassed. The Waihora Block, of about 1,442 acres, in three sections, situated in Waikohu County, a few miles from Te Karaka—improved country suited for grazing and fattening. Timahanga Block, of 19,000 acres, and the Kuripapanga Block, of 5,532 acres, will both be made available for application as pastoral runs. They comprise high, broken, exposed country. The Arataki land (formerly the Agricultural Experimental Farm), near Havelock North, of about 52 acres, has been subdivided into six allotments. The areas with buildings will be sold for cash under the Land Act, and the balance will be dealt with as small farms.

The Crown still owns considerable interests in Native lands in this district, but those held in the southern part, and also near Wairoa, are subject to good leases, and it is not likely that any settlement will be considered until these leases have expired.

Up the east coast the conditions are not the same, and until recently it has been almost impossible to deal with the lands by reason of the scattered position of the Crown's interests. The benefits of consolidation have been recognized by the Native owners, and much progress has been made within the last few months towards the consolidation of the Crown's interests in the well-known Waipiro Block. Other blocks are being similarly dealt with, and, although the vagaries of ownership preclude much rapid work, the course appears to be clear.

TARANAKI.

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

Conditions and Progress of Settlement. As anticipated in my last report, another disappointing year has to be reported on, and stabilization of this district's primary exports, although apparently coming slowly, is still doubtful. The high prices obtaining for butter very badly slumped, and many factories in the finest producing part of the season had to be content with a pay-out of 7d. per pound. There is no doubt that a heavy stock of previous seasons' butter, bought for home marketing at enhanced rates, and the sale thereof withheld owing to a desire to at least realize on the cost, was a great factor in keeping prices at such a low standard. In the last month of our financial year the position somewhat improved, and the possibilities of a third to one-fifth payment seem more assured. There is another phase of the butter industry that must not be overlooked, and that is that though the very much increased output owing to a favourable season will largely assist towards an increase in the money received, yet tests are not so good—more milk, but lower tests—and prices are on a lower basis. The wool and grazing industries have had similar experiences. To expect that the extremely high prices of the boom would continue indefinitely was absurd; and, conversely, it is just as unreasonable to assume that the present low prices will prove to be permanent.

It is pleasing to note that although the upward tendency in wool has not been very marked, still it is very heartening to those engaged in the industry. Sheep-prices are also hardening, and it is very reasonable to assume that the short-sighted policy of slaughtering lambs for freezing—more particularly ewe lambs—will soon deplete the flocks of the district. There is no doubt there is still a hard winter to face, but the prospects seem much brighter; but what many an ordinary settler—as well as a soldier one—cannot do is face a depression after going on a property with the cheery optimism that prices for staple products would always remain at the record prices of a year or two ago. This especially applies to the grazing industry.

Revenue and Arrears. The revenue figures, considering the size of the district, are again heavy, the freeholding of leases under the West Coast Settlement being largely responsible. Exclusive of returns in connection with returned-soldier work, the sum of £153,038 was banked for the year. The arrears are heavier than previously, but everything possible was done to collect them.

Land remaining for Selection. The lands comprised under this heading are, in the main, grazing sections, and the prospects of selection of these are negligible while the price of beef remains as at present. However, several sections previously restricted to soldier selection have not been taken up at date. The Proclamation has now been revoked, and it is proposed to offer them for general selection at an early date.

Lands opened for Selection. In the main, offerings have been for soldiers, but owing to the conditions prevailing there has been a disposition not to take up land until the position became more normal. Estates totalling eleven sections, of an area of 2,428 acres, have been placed on the market, one of these being for discharged soldiers only, while the residue of land offered was mostly wayback sections not previously selected. There have been several sales of education-reserve leases, but the areas have been small, and the slump has retarded their selection.

Freeholds and Cash Lands.—These have been, in the main, West Coast Settlement Reserve leases, and there is no doubt that had financial arrangements been more satisfactory these totals, though large, would have been exceeded.

Land Board Work.—Although there has not been the rush of previous years, owing to the partial discontinuance of soldier advances, the work has been heavy owing to the consideration required to meet cases where the slump has impaired the general working of farms. In many cases relief has been sought either by advances on stock or the postponement of overdue instalments and rent. The number of soldiers' applications dealt with was 871; ordinary transfers, 116; miscellaneous items, applications approved, and general, 272: total 1,259.