

APPENDICES.

APPENDIX I.—SETTLEMENT OF CROWN LANDS.

EXTRACTS FROM THE REPORTS OF THE COMMISSIONERS OF CROWN LANDS ON
SETTLEMENT OPERATIONS DURING THE TWELVE MONTHS WHICH ENDED ON
THE 31st MARCH, 1922.

NORTH AUCKLAND.

(R. P. GREVILLE, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

Conditions and Progress of Settlement.—The past year has been a depressing and difficult one for the farmer generally. With the low price for stock and produce, and for a long time with little prospect of any improvement, it looked in the earlier part of the year as though the bottom had dropped out of farming altogether. Our soldier settlers and selectors found it difficult to stand up against these adverse conditions; the only redeeming feature was the good season. Later on in the year the position began to improve, and all round the prospects became much brighter. All things considered, the majority of our settlers have faced their difficulties bravely, and, with the help we have been able to give them in the nature of postponements of payments in some cases, and capitalizations of improvements in other cases, will no doubt be able to pull through successfully.

The Dairying Industry.—The past year has been a record one for the production of butter and cheese. The mild winter of 1921 was followed by a good spring and summer, with the result that there has been an abundance of feed throughout the year, and all the conditions were favourable for the production of butterfat. The fall in the prices of wool, mutton, and beef caused many farmers who had not hitherto done so to go in for dairying, thus helping to increase the output. Notwithstanding the increased output and the favourable conditions above referred to, the past season has been a difficult and discouraging one for the dairy-farmer. In the first place he had to face very much lower prices than had prevailed for the previous two years, and added to this there was the uncertainty and general want of confidence in regard to the future. As the season advanced, there was the uncertainty as to the rate of the advance for the month, with the prospect of a probable refund against an overpayment in the earlier months, which made the position a very difficult one. The season closed with brighter prospects, and with a probability of the factories being able to pay out 1s. 3d. a pound for the whole season. I am advised on the authority of a well known expert that the prices of butter now are 50 per cent. higher than those of 1914, and the price of cheese is 25 per cent. higher, whereas the output of these two products has increased from 25 to 33 per cent. The same authority says that the average yearly shortage on the English market at present is from 85,000 to 90,000 tons out of a total of 220,000 tons; the Continental shortage having arisen owing to so many cattle having been slaughtered for food in France, Belgium, Germany, and Russia during the Great War. It will no doubt be many years before conditions in this respect are back to normal. All things considered, the prospects for the dairy-farmer are encouraging, for England has to rely on New Zealand and Australia for 25 per cent. of her butter-supply, and on New Zealand for 60 per cent. of her imported supply of cheese.

The past two or three seasons have shown that comparatively small and isolated factories have turned out a quality of butter of a very high standard, and also that these factories, conducting their business under one roof both in regard to the amount of money paid to their suppliers and the quality of their product, come out well in comparison with larger concerns carried on over extensive and scattered areas.

As far as this district is concerned, it is worthy of record that in the competition for the Weddell Cup, open to cheese and butter factories in the Auckland District, some of the most northern factories stand out well, Kaitaia being second with 94.26 points, Whangaroa third with 93.68 points, Oruru fifth with 93.56 points. There are thirty-one dairy factories operating in this district, and the total output for the year was 9,846 tons of butter and 1,170 tons of cheese.

The Stock-market.—The slump in the price of all classes of stock, which was very pronounced by the end of March, 1921, went from bad to worse as the year advanced, the only exception being in the price of dairy stock, which showed an improvement in the spring owing to the fact that the ordinary grazier has put on a dairy herd and that prospects for a payable price for butterfat for the season seemed good. However, when the price of butterfat began to decline, the price of dairy stock fell in a corresponding degree, until good cows were selling at half their former values.

The following remarks, taken from a report of Messrs. Dalgety and Co., dated 13th March, 1922, are worthy of being placed on record: "Owing to the stagnation in the frozen-meat trade in England, beef becoming practically unsaleable, and lamb and mutton selling at very low prices, it was only natural that when the freezing season opened in New Zealand low prices would be paid to the producers; but when the buyers' prices were circulated it seemed as if the bottom had fallen out of the market, and it was at this stage that store stock was unsaleable. The prices offered for frozen meat were as follows: Prime lamb—36 lb. and under, 4½d.; 37–42 lb. and second quality, 3½d.; wethers—64 lb. and under, 2½d.; 65–72 lb., 1¾d.; over 72 lb., 1½d.; ewes—64 lb. and under, 1½d.; 65–72 lb., ¾d.; over 72 lb., ¾d.; while the majority of exporters would not make any offers for frozen beef."