

EXTENT TO WHICH CROWN TENANTS HAVE MORTGAGED THEIR HOLDINGS.

(Part G, Order of Reference.)

In the district under review there are, excluding soldiers' land, about 1,990 Crown holdings, with a total area of 874,700 acres. Of these holdings 75, with a total area of 42,905 acres, have been abandoned. The percentage of holdings abandoned is 3·77, and the percentage of area abandoned 4·9. It is impossible to obtain accurate information regarding the area and proportion of deteriorated lands and the financial position of settlers over the whole area. The following statement is compiled from circulars returned by 310 settlers in the various counties, and may be taken as an approximate average and accepted as a fair basis for estimation :—

Number of settlers who sent in statements	310
	Acres.
Total area occupied	165,220
Area felled and cleared	122,250
Area fairly clean	68,341
Area in second growth	43,909
	£
Government loans—Stock	9,275
Land	226,996
Private loans—Stock	67,679
Land	221,818
Advances on land per acre over total area (165,220 acres)—	£ s. d.
By State Departments	1 7 6
From other sources	1 6 10
Total indebtedness per acre on land	£2 14 4
Advances on stock, per acre—	£ s. d.
By State Departments	0 1 1
From other sources	0 8 2
Total indebtedness per acre over total area (165,220 acres)	£3 3 7
Advances per acre on total area of felled land (112,250 acres)—	£ s. d.
By State Departments	2 0 5
By private firms	1 19 9
Total indebtedness per acre	£4 0 2
Total indebtedness per acre on 68,341 acres fairly clean land, including stock	£ s. d.
	7 14 0
	Per Cent.
Proportion of the reverted country to area felled and grassed	39·12
Proportion of the country fairly clean to area felled and grassed	60·88

Money lent by the State, if on the same ratio as above, on an area of 874,700 acres, would be £1,209,000; and from private sources an almost similar amount, £1,174,000, is involved. This makes a total of £2,383,000; and to this must be added £493,500 for stock mortgages. Besides money lent on Crown holdings, different Government Departments have securities in the same districts on freeholds and other tenures, so that the Government is concerned with this phase of the question as well, where it guarantees such funds.

(5.) METHODS OF DEALING WITH SECONDARY GROWTH.

(Part F, Order of Reference.)

There are four main methods of dealing with the secondary-growth problem, which methods more or less overlap and are interdependent the one on another. These are—

- (i.) The use of cattle and necessary fencing to control the cattle-stocking.
- (ii.) Resowing with low-fertility-demanding grasses.
- (iii.) Top-dressing with artificial manures, spelling, &c.
- (iv.) Direct manual labour in cutting, burning, &c.

The use of cattle, the need of fencing, the advisability of using low-fertility-demanding grasses have been previously discussed. The wonderful results that have followed the top-dressing of worn-out grassland in many parts of New Zealand have led to a general idea that in top-dressing lies the salvation of the secondary-growth grasslands of the North. There is no doubt that top-dressing, rationally carried out, will prove of great value, but just how, when, and where top-dressing should be done is hard to answer satisfactorily. Top-dressing of weak grassland and of any portions that are moderately well grassed appears to the committee to be sound under nearly all circumstances. Top-dressing will increase the feed produced and thereby increase the stock carried. Top-dressing increases