

APPENDICES.

APPENDIX I.—SETTLEMENT OF CROWN LANDS.

EXTRACTS FROM THE REPORTS OF THE COMMISSIONERS OF CROWN LANDS.

NORTH AUCKLAND.

(O. N. CAMPBELL, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

A retrospect of the past season is remarkable for the abnormal weather conditions experienced, which were, however, not altogether unfavourable. After an exceptionally wet winter a good spring and then a long drought prevailed, with practically no growth. Instead of the usually showery weather, a period of hot, sunny weather with drying winds was experienced. Early autumn with nice warm rain has improved matters and removed the anxiety of the farmers.

Paspalum this year has not made very rigorous growth, but it has again shown its value by resisting severe drought and insect pests, and has given good yields when other grasses had ceased to grow.

Dairying Industry.—The season started off under most favourable conditions, and a record quantity of butter and cheese was anticipated; but in mid-season the drought upset all calculations, and many of the herds were on once-a-day milking in February and dry by March. The struggling settler whose farm was not fully developed had a fairly bad season, as he had to feed his herd to keep up the milk-yield, and, notwithstanding the splendid autumn, the grass did not come along sufficiently to obtain a second crop of hay, although crops of soft turnips and oats have done well and will be required for winter feed. Prices, though satisfactory, were not up to expectations, and an average price of 1s. 3d. is about all that may be expected. Branches of the New Zealand Herd-testing Association are being formed in this district, and will prove of great benefit. Water has been a serious problem on many farms. Streams and springs that had never been known to dry up failed early in the summer season, and water had to be carted for stock and other purposes.

Top-dressing is now accepted as the secret of success, and every farmer who can afford it top-dresses as much as he possibly can, with good results and increased production and revenue.

Forage crops in all but favoured localities have not been a success, and the hay crops have been exceedingly light.

Cattle.—Beef has improved very much in value, and good store-cattle prices have been satisfactory in sympathy with beef values. Dairy cows have been in demand this last year, and prices rose considerably, due to the butter-fat prices and shortage of dairy cows. Good dairy heifers are already in demand at satisfactory prices to the breeder.

Sheep and Wool.—The period of dry weather has been of advantage to the wool industry. The wool-clip was a very good one, heavier in weight and well grown. Prices have been satisfactory, and, the market being brisk, there is practically no carry-over for next season. Lambing percentages have been above the average, and the rate of mortality low.

Pigs.—The industry has been depressed and prices stagnant. This branch is considered an important factor in farmers' receipts, but the bottom appears to have completely fallen out of the market, and it has been almost impossible to quit stocks except at a price under cost of production; there is, however, a more hopeful outlook for the future.

Fruit.—The fruit crop this year, especially the apple, is well above the average, and the export to England and South America appears to be a record. Local prices are on a payable basis, but the net return to the grower is small.

Poultry.—The high cost of poultry-feed is the cause of the comparative failure of the poultry industry, which appears to be in about the same position as last year.

Bees.—This industry is on the increase in the district, and more production has been obtained. Great Barrier Island is now a principal centre of production, and large quantities of honey have been obtained from that locality this season.

Land Board Work.—The Land Board held thirteen meetings during the year, occupying thirty-six days. The number of items dealt with totalled 1,502, of which 956 were in connection with ordinary Crown lands, and 546 dealt with the administration under the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act. Besides the above work the Land Board conducted nine ballots and examined the applicants for land in connection therewith.

The term of appointment of Messrs. Wells and Finlayson expired on the 1st April, 1927, and they were reappointed. Mr. W. T. Hunt, of Ruawai, tenant's representative, was returned unopposed for a further term.