

*Lands offered and selected.*—Besides the area of 44,188 acres open for selection in the Land Guide at the beginning of the period, a further 15,067 acres were offered during the year for sale or selection on ordinary permanent tenures.

Demand for land was brisk, a total of 17,743 acres being disposed of to 224 selectors, which is an appreciable increase on last year's figures of 173 selectors and 11,855 acres. The area offered comprised for the most part rural holdings, the majority being unimproved. Small holdings within easy reach of the city have readily found tenants, and the demand for this type of holding exceeds the supply.

The continued demand for building-sections was met by the offering of sixteen sections in Carroll Settlement and eighty-nine sections in Orakei Garden Suburb. Sections in both blocks have been freely selected, some of those in the latter block bringing good prices at auction.

*Freeholds.*—During the year 46 holdings, of an area of 2,554 acres, were freeholded. The total cash received, excepting cash purchases, was £2,979.

*Lands for Future Disposal.*—Kapiro Block (17,500 acres): Experiments are still being carried out by the Agriculture Department with a view to testing if the land can be profitably worked. If results justify, the whole area will be subdivided and offered.

Kai Iwi Block (5,560 acres): A portion of this block was deemed suitable for settlement, but owing to its poorness is being withheld for the present. A large portion of the block is being set aside for scenic purposes.

Kerikeri Block (6,700 acres): Owing to difficulty of drainage, this block will be offered as a small grazing-run. The matter of giving a practical fence-line is receiving attention, and offering should not be long delayed.

Omaunu Block (2,000 acres): This block will be opened when roading is complete. Steps are being taken to raise the necessary finance for this work.

Orakei Township: This block has been planned as a model suburb, and subdivided for residential purposes, with provision for suitable shop-sites and reserves for various purposes. Forty-six sections have already been disposed of by auction, and throughout the ensuing year, in keeping with demand, further sections will be offered to the public.

Otaika Block (4,700 acres): Nearly all gum land which can be brought into grass. With the assistance of the Agriculture Department the land is being tested by actual farming to prove by an exact balance-sheet whether this country can be kept in good heart and made to pay more than interest on the whole outlay.

Parahirahi Block (9,000 acres): The parts of this block held by the Forestry Department for the disposal of the timber thereon have now been handed back. About 1,600 acres will be offered at an early date, but the balance is probably suitable for tree-planting only.

Poroti Block (3,500 acres): This block is shortly to be offered under section 223 of the Land Act, 1924, subdivided into about twenty-six sections of from 100 to 150 acres each.

Tangowahine Block (4,264 acres): The block purchased from Messrs. Hawkins and Coleman has been surveyed, and will be offered for general selection at an early date.

*Roads and Railways.*—A very considerable improvement is noticeable in the main highways, due to grading, metalling, and better supervision. Many of the by-roads have also been improved and metalled, so that the settlers' means of communication is improving each year, and the transport difficulties, which are still very real, are gradually being overcome. The continuance of carriage of lime free and a reduced cost in carriage of manures for top-dressing is greatly appreciated by the settlers, and has proved a wise concession. The new road through the Waipoua State Forest, connecting the residents of Waimamaku with Dargaville, is now completed, and metalling will, I understand, be completed in due course. This road goes through one of the beauty-spots of the Dominion and enables tourists and others to inspect the magnificent kauris within the forest area.

*Mangrove Swamps.*—The bringing-in of mangrove swamps is an expensive undertaking, but nevertheless there is much room for development in this direction. Most of our northern harbours are fringed with areas of these mud-flats, which are rich in quality and drainable. Very little work of this nature has as yet been undertaken, but as time goes on they will be gradually brought in and developed for dairying purposes.

*Gum Lands.*—Experiments are being carried out by officers of the Department of Agriculture in the bringing-in of gum lands and testing their suitability for dairying. One block of land at Riverhead, containing 977 acres, and subdivided into eight sections, was opened during the year under section 223 of the Land Act. Every section was taken up, the selectors being mostly adjoining holders.

*General.*—A new dairy factory has been built at Kirikopuni and will be working next season, and it is proposed to erect a new one at Te Hana.

The general outlook is quite satisfactory, but there is much room for development. Production will increase year by year for many years yet. Much of the land is of medium to poor quality, but with the variety of crops that can be grown and the favourable climate the district will ultimately be closely settled. Now that fertilizer-costs are reasonably low it seems to me that the urgent need of the North is all-weather roads.

Land according to present-day standards is gradually approaching the productive value, and with the prices of produce more or less stabilized as at present all classes of farming should do well.

A general review of the operations of the freezing-works, the output of butter from the various factories, prices of wool obtained, all tend to prove that progress has been made in this district and is likely to further increase.