

1928.
NEW ZEALAND.

DEPARTMENT OF LANDS AND SURVEY.

DRAINAGE OPERATIONS IN HAURAKI PLAINS.

REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH, 1928, TOGETHER WITH STATEMENT
OF ACCOUNTS.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly pursuant to Section 20 of the Hauraki Plains Act, 1926.

SIR,—

Department of Lands and Survey, Wellington, 30th June, 1928.

I have the honour to present herewith the report of the Chief Drainage Engineer on operations carried out during the past year on the Hauraki Plains in accordance with the provisions of the Hauraki Plains Act, 1926.

I have, &c.,

J. B. THOMPSON,

Under-Secretary for Lands.

The Hon. A. D. McLeod, Minister of Lands.

REPORT OF CHIEF DRAINAGE ENGINEER.

SIR,—

I have the honour to submit herewith the twentieth annual report on the Hauraki Plains land reclamation and general development works carried out during the financial year ending 31st March, 1928.

An exceptionally dry summer has been an important contributing factor to the substantial progress made with the development works. As there was practically no rain for a period of fifty-four days during January and most of February, the production of the farms was undoubtedly reduced, but returns up to the end of January were in excess of previous records. It is very satisfactory to find that the dairy factories operating on the Hauraki Plains report that the season's increase in dairy-produce will most likely exceed the average rate of increase for previous years.

The following figures of produce and stock returns, which have been prepared from all available sources, clearly indicate the value of the drainage scheme. For purposes of comparison, the previous year's returns are given in parenthesis :—

Butter produced	..	..	..	..	..	2,350	(2,300) tons.
Cheese	..	..	..	..	..	1,296	(1,235) tons.
Fibre and tow	..	..	..	..	..	1,200	(1,000) tons.
Estimated value of stock sold	..	..	..	..	..	£59,170	(£45,000).
Freights to and from Piako River and Waitakaruru	..	..	..	..	..	11,426	(8,000) tons.

The green fields and comparative abundance of feed on the Plains were in striking contrast to less fortunate districts, where the unusually dry nature of the summer was reflected in parched pastures, and many Hauraki Plains settlers found that the sale of compressed hay was a lucrative business. The sweetening effect and greater porosity resulting from the thorough drying of the surface soil will also prove beneficial. However, the drying of the peat lands produced troublesome peat fires, and the strenuous efforts of flax-millers and the Department's employees could not prevent the loss of a considerable quantity of growing flax. The annual loss resulting from the destruction of valuable flax and cost of fire-fighting emphasizes the necessity of the necessary statutory authority