

MARLBOROUGH.

(J. STEVENSON, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

My general remarks on settlement of Crown lands apply also to the discharged-soldier settlers. The majority engaged in sheep-farming and cropping have experienced quite a satisfactory year, whilst the dairy-farmers, except those in the drought-affected portion of the district, have also gained satisfactory returns, and the general position of settlement may be considered on the improve.

Notwithstanding the concessions of the Dominion Revaluation Board, it is apparent that a number of cases still require to be further considered. My absence on investigation of deteriorated lands has retarded this work in my own district, but it must be commenced at an early date, as it is felt that the overload is still too heavy. Let it be said in favour of the settlers that the majority are genuinely endeavouring to make their ventures successful and are worthy of sympathetic consideration.

The conversion of Current Account mortgages to instalment mortgages has received consideration, and the policy of conversion will be steadily advanced as circumstances permit.

The following is the position of accounts under the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act:—

Current Account advances, £48,178 8s. 1d.; instalment mortgage advances on farms, £212,587 5s. 4d.; instalment mortgage advances on dwellings, £88,336 3s. 6d.: total, £349,101 16s. 11d.

Receipts during the year, £34,598 18s. 2d.

Arrears of interest on Current Account, £2,140 18s. 8d.; arrears of instalments on farms, £6,477 3s.; arrears of instalments on dwellings, £199 9s. 5d.

Postponements of principal and interest at the end of the year amounted to—Farms, £6,914 9s. 9d.; dwellings, £188 16s.; Current Account, £347 13s. 9d.

WESTLAND.

(W. T. MORPETH, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

Almost without exception the discharged-soldier settlers in this district are firmly established. The settlers have come to realize that the advice of the Field Inspectors in the matter of herd-testing and top-dressing is sound, and by a genuine endeavour to keep abreast of the times and profit by the experience of others, combined with the exceptionally favourable spring and summer, they are in a fair way to becoming established on the land, with an assured future.

CANTERBURY.

(W. STEWART, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

Soldier settlement is now on a sound basis, and the past good season has firmly established many whose position was still doubtful a year ago. The effects of the Dominion Board's findings has been to hearten those who, despite a hard struggle, had been unable to make headway under too heavy a burden. It can now be said that this class of settler is better off than many freehold farmers, or even than some of our civilian settlers who are seeking relief under last year's legislation. The few who will not be able to carry on are either unsuitable for farming the class of land they hold or oppressed by debts from which the Department has been unable to secure their release.

OTAGO.

(R. S. GALBRAITH, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The soldier settlers, on the whole, have had a satisfactory year, particularly those who have been engaged in sheep-farming. The task of ameliorating the conditions under which many men were struggling is now nearing completion. Some adjustments will still be required, both in regard to valuations and areas, but these will not be numerous. All that is needed now to put the soldier settlers firmly on their feet as prosperous farmers is a continuation of last season's market prices combined with favourable weather conditions.

SOUTHLAND.

(N. C. KENSINGTON, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

Soldier settlement in this district continues to make steady progress. The good prices ruling for wool and lambs has proved of great assistance to those who are going in for mixed farming, but the settler dependent on dairying and supplying a butter-factory will not benefit equally with the supplier to the cheese-factory. Unfortunately for the settler hoping to supplement his returns by the sale of pigs, the price offering for pork is on the low side; but even so, if run economically, this side-line is of great assistance, and has proved such to many soldier settlers.

There are still a few settlers who are on properties that require special attention, and the Dominion Revaluation Board are further reviewing these cases and endeavouring to better their position; but, fortunately, there are very few to which these remarks refer.

Speaking generally, there are a very small number of soldier settlers that should not be able to meet their obligations in the future, provided they stock up to full carrying-capacity, cull out, and generally farm on sound lines.

Four soldier settlers abandoned their farms during the past year, and these have since been selected. There are no abandoned farms or town houses on the hands of the Department in this district.