

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.)

The past season has been an exceptionally good one for the farmers in this district; good steady progress has been maintained, and prices of produce have been quite satisfactory. Owing to last year's drought the outlook was not bright, but the mild winter combined with frequent rains throughout the spring and early summer produced luxuriant growth, and the increased production has evened up last year's shortage. It was not until the late spring that hay was fed to the stock—ample evidence of the amount of green feed available. Paspalum this year has made vigorous growth, and owing to its drought-resisting quality it has supplied a large amount of the green feed during the dry spell in the late summer.

Dairying Industry.—This industry is still growing, and production has increased to the extent of nearly 20 per cent. on last year's output. Prices, too, have been well maintained; an average of 1s. 4d. to 1s. 5d. per pound for butterfat must be considered good. Large areas are now sown in paspalum, and this factor, coupled with the activities of the herd-testing associations and the plentiful supplies of top-dressing manures, have all tended to considerably increased production.

Cattle.—Beef-prices have improved, and more confidence in this line is given to the breeder and grazier. The "bobby veal" industry, which appears as though it has come to stay, is largely responsible for the shortage in cattle and the consequent increase in price of beef.

Sheep and Wool.—Wool-prices have been good, and the clip, both in respect to quantity and quality, has been above the average. All classes of sheep are still in keen demand, and cull stock have been bringing good prices. The lambing percentage has been on a par with previous years, but the rate of mortality has been lower. Farmers have had no difficulty in quitting surplus sheep at a profit.

Pigs.—In some parts of this district not enough interest has been taken in this side-line of the dairying industry. This is apparently due to the inconsistent prices obtained. However, in the North at the freezing-works the killings have increased, with prices fair, but on the whole the industry is not a flourishing one.

Poultry.—Eggs this season have not realized the prices as in previous years, and this, combined with the high price of feed, has in many cases prevented the farmer who is dependent upon this industry for a living from making his income meet his expenditure.

Land Board Work.—The Land Board held twelve meetings during the year, occupying twenty-seven days. The number of items dealt with totalled 1,421, of which 891 were in connection with ordinary Crown lands and 530 dealt with the administration under the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act.

The term of appointment of Mr. Waters expired on the 5th May, 1928, and he was reappointed for a further period.

Land offered and selected.—An area of 19,727 acres was offered during the year for sale or selection on permanent tenures—an increase of 4,660 acres over the previous year's offering. Demand for land was brisk, and the area selected, of 27,852 acres, taken up by 248 selectors, shows an appreciable increase on the previous year's selection of 17,743 acres by 224 selectors. The land offered comprised mainly unimproved rural holdings. Land improved or partly improved has been sought after, and in most cases was readily disposed of. A further batch of sections in the Orakei Garden Suburb was offered at public auction, the response being good.

Freeholds.—Tenants are increasingly availing themselves of the right to acquire the fee-simple of lands held under lease to the Crown, the total freeholds for the year, including cash sales, being 76 purchasers of 6,064 acres, as against last year's totals of 46 purchasers of 2,554 acres.

Roads and Railways.—The activities of the Highways Board are very noticeable in this district. Good progress in the construction of all-weather highways is being made, and there is every prospect of a through metal-road connection from Auckland to Kaitia becoming an accomplished fact next year. The provision of all-weather roads is an essential preliminary to the settlement of the northern clay lands, and all money spent in this direction is well spent. The so-called poor gum lands of the North will in time carry a big population.

Gum Lands.—Experiments are still being carried out by the Agriculture Department on the different classes of gum lands in this district, and with proper cultivation and liberal top-dressing this class of land can be gradually brought in and successfully settled.

General.—The Bay of Islands Co-operative Dairy Co. contemplates closing their factory at Ohaeawai and building a larger factory at Moerewa, while a new dairy factory is being erected at Kaikohe.

On the whole the outlook is much brighter than last year. There has been an absence of land speculation, and settlers are increasingly developing their holdings by bringing in new country and improving their existing pastures. The provision of hard roads and cheap money will facilitate this progress.