

to do so. Instances have come under notice where free grazing has been offered in a desire to cope with the abundant feed. The season was so good that farmers were in a quandary at the end of July as to not being able to dry off their cows, so great was the flush of feed. All stock were in remarkably good condition for the winter months.

With prices of fat stock still high and ample feed available there is every prospect of a first-class season in the coming year. Stock will go into winter in good condition, and unless the cold weather is unduly severe no setback should be experienced.

Land opened for Selection.—Early in the year four sections in the Hereheretau Block—areas, from 625 acres to 807 acres—were opened for selection, and all taken up. These sections carried an exemption from rent for two years.

The Waimarama Block, comprising six sections—areas, from 463 acres to 882 acres—was opened in February, and the number of applications received showed that there is a very keen demand for good sheep-country.

Apart from these two blocks the only other lands offered comprised principally forfeited sections, and in most cases these were readily disposed of, the total area selected during the twelve months being 29,268 acres, and number of selectors seventy-seven.

Mohaka Block.—It was hoped at the beginning of the year that the consolidation of the various interests in this block would be completed in sufficient time to allow of the opening of the land to public competition. The hope, however, did not materialize, and it is not possible at present to say when the land will be available. Approximately 15,000 acres will be eventually cut up.

Otawhao Block.—A consolidation of the Native and Crown interests in this block is at present under way, and it is hoped in the near future to have an area of about 1,300 acres available for selection, which should cut up into eight good dairy-farms.

Poukawa Lake.—Dredging-work has been commenced by the Land Drainage Branch in the stream forming the outlet to the lake, and when this work is finished it will be possible to open for selection an area of 3,000 acres, comprising excellent hilly and flat land.

Land Board.—During the year twelve ordinary meetings and one special meeting were held, and a visit of inspection was made to the Te Kura Settlement. I have to express my warm appreciation of the labours of members and the work done by them in the interests of the settlement of land.

Revenue.—The ordinary revenue for the twelve months was £146,144, the highest recorded since the district was divided, and an increase of £5,947 over the previous year.

TARANAKI.

(W. D. ARMIT, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

From a farming point of view the past season has been very favourable. The mild climatic conditions during spring resulted in an early flush of grass, and butterfat-production showed a remarkable increase over the previous season during the first months of supply. Throughout the year this margin has been maintained, resulting in a very satisfactory seasonal increase in butterfat-production over the whole period. Prices, however, have not been so well maintained, and cheese-prices in particular have declined steadily throughout the season, after opening at an excellent figure. The quality of New Zealand cheese is the subject of close inquiry at the present time, but large shipments from competitive countries on the London market, together with fairly heavy stocks in hand during the close of the season, doubtless supply the main reason for the fall of cheese-prices. Generally speaking, however, the dairy-farmer has experienced a very satisfactory season. Hay and ensilage crops have been good, and provision for winter feed is plentiful. The price of dairy stock is now on a high level, recent sales of medium-quality early calvers averaging £12 to £14.

Crown tenants in the northern portion of the district are experiencing difficulty with ragwort in an increasing manner where dairying is being carried out. The graziers have experienced a reasonably good year, with wool-prices well maintained up to the final sale for this district at Wanganui. Owing to indifferent roads in parts of the back country a quantity of back-country wool is offered at the late sales, and it is satisfactory to note that average prices were secured at this offering. The beef market has been quiet, but the local demand for cattle to stock back-country farms has contributed to maintain dry-stock prices at a high level. It may be said that the district experienced a surplus of feed over the season owing to the mild climatic conditions and good average rainfall.

Deteriorated Lands Act Operations.—A total of 289 cases have been dealt with during the past season. Crown tenants are co-operating with the Department in a very satisfactory manner by way of securing remissions of rental in return for improvements effected by way of fencing, scrub-cutting, or application of artificial manures. Appreciation and thanks are due to the officers of the Agricultural Department for their valuable co-operation in this direction. Their advice to settlers and promptness in furnishing reports play an important part in the administration of this Act.

Demonstration Farm, Whangamomona.—The property leased to Messrs. J. Gordon and Son, of 226 acres, has been further improved by way of additional scrub-cutting, 40 chains fencing, and top-dressing. The winter carrying-capacity has already been considerably increased over the past season, and this year twenty-eight milking-cows and thirty-two cattle of mixed age, together with about two hundred breeding-ewes, will be wintered. The property continues to be well managed, and will be treated with further artificial manures under arrangement with the committee in control under the terms of the lease.