

Land Board Work.—Meetings of the Board were held on forty days during the year, the number of cases dealt with totalling 1,525, inclusive of applications under the Deteriorated Lands Act and Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act. Mr. Ryan was re-elected to represent the Crown tenants, and Mr. N. R. Cleland reappointed for a further term. I desire to record my appreciation of the assistance given by all the members of the Board in the work of the past year.

Education Endowment Reserves.—Inspections of these reserves are being constantly carried out, and numerous renewals occur, requiring valuations and occasional arbitrations. The area administered under this heading is 53,522 acres.

Freehold Tenure.—Freeholds acquired during the year represent a total of 1,171 acres by nine purchasers. There is a decided falling-off in the purchase of the freehold of West Coast Settlement Reserve lands.

WELLINGTON.

(H. W. C. MACKINTOSH, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

Speaking generally, the year just closed may be regarded as a period of satisfactory progress in all the classes of farming followed by the Crown settlers in the Wellington Land District. Dairy-farmers and pastoralists alike have experienced a good year. Last winter was a remarkably good one for stock, there having been less than the usual average of severe weather.

Sheep and Wool.—The sharp rise in the value of sheep which was experienced during the year before was well maintained, this fact being mainly due to the high prices ruling for wool in the selling season, and also to the markedly good prices obtained for fat lambs, more especially during the latter part of the season. Both fat and store sheep have realized high prices during the year. In the autumn there was a keen demand for sound-mouthed breeding-ewes, but purchasers were disinclined to pay the prices ruling for young ewes last year. Even after the freezing-works closed high prices have ruled through winter and spring up to the time of writing, as supplies have not exceeded requirements. In some parts the rank growth of grass has prejudiced the welfare of the sheep, and late lambs did not do so well.

In the so-called deteriorated-land area in the northern part of the district the concessions granted under the Deteriorated Lands Act, 1925, have created credits in the settlers' accounts, and these moneys have been availed of to carry out top-dressing and general improvements. These operations are proving remunerative, but in many cases transport charges make the work expensive.

Some new roads and bridges in the more remote localities have been completed during the year, and the improved access thus provided will enable numerous settlers to make headway.

Dairying.—Last winter was one of the mildest experienced for a long time, and dairy cows commenced the season in excellent condition. The weather in the spring and summer up to the end of February was ideal for the growth of pastures and crops, the result being that record returns for butterfat have been obtained. The favourable season caused an abnormal growth of grass, and in many cases insufficient stock was available to keep the feed in the best condition. The more general application of top-dressing manures has no doubt materially affected the increased butterfat returns. This, together with systematic and judicious culling of herds, and the rearing of heifers from cows of proved butterfat production, will go far towards solving the problem of the successful farming of small holdings of highly priced land.

Some herds have had a certain amount of disease amongst them, and if these diseases are eliminated there will remain little doubt about the future prospects of the small farmer. All things considered, the dairyman has experienced a good year. Prices for produce have maintained a payable level, and increased production has compensated for the lower prices obtained in some localities in comparison with those ruling last year. There is every reason why the Crown tenants may look to the coming year with equanimity.

The revenue for the year was £223,940.

The Land Board met on twelve occasions during the year. A large amount of business was transacted, comprising some 1,280 items. A large number of difficult problems affecting both land and finance came before the Board, and I again desire to place on record my appreciation of the cordial manner in which the members of the Board have co-operated with me in dealing with these matters.

There is an increasing demand for land, both for dairying and for pastoral purposes. The high prices ruling for most farm-products are no doubt a factor in creating the demand. Any areas of any value that become available for selection are eagerly sought after. It is anticipated that the Weraroa Experimental Farm will shortly be subdivided for settlement, and already many inquiries have been received concerning it.

NELSON.

(A. F. WATERS, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The farmers generally in the Nelson district have experienced a good year, climatic conditions having been particularly favourable. The winter was exceptionally mild, followed by abundant rains in the spring and early summer. There has been a luxuriant growth of grass, and consequently sheep and cattle have done particularly well.

Sheep and Wool.—The prices of wool at the earlier sales were very satisfactory, but owing to a break in prices in the February and March sales farmers who missed the earlier sales received rather