

and the decrease of rabbits. The season's wool-sales showed a decided drop in prices as compared with those obtained in the previous year. Although the production was about 7,000 bales above that of last year, the increase did not compensate for the reduced price. At the end of the 1928 season exceptional prices were paid for fat lambs, settlers getting as much as 7s. to 8s. per head more for the last drafts than for their first ones. This season the schedule price opened at 10½d. per pound, but this favourable rate to the producer was, unfortunately, not maintained. About the end of January a reduction of ½d. per pound was announced, and by the beginning of March the price had fallen to 9d. It is gratifying to note, however, that the present indications point to an upward tendency. Notwithstanding the fall in price of wool and lambs, the returns should afford the sheep-farmer little or no cause for anxiety, and if prices remain at their present parity the sheep-farming industry will continue to be prosperous.

Dairy-farmers have had a good season. Feed was plentiful, the cows were in good condition, a very good return of butter and cheese was shown, and the prices realized were remunerative. Prices for grain compare favourably with those of last year, and farmers in most instances realized their expectations. Pig-raising has been a disappointing industry, the prices obtained being below the cost of production. Only a small proportion of settlers, however, depend to any extent on this source of income. Fruitgrowers have had, on the whole, a fairly good season, with average prices ruling.

Irrigation.—Farming pursuits in Central Otago are very closely associated with irrigation, and the future of that part of the district in regard to increased production is largely dependent on the judicious development and use of the lands where water can be made available at a payable price. A relatively small area of irrigable land held in conjunction with a fairly large area of run country makes a very valuable and profitable property which can easily bear a high rate for water, and this is the ideal use to which irrigation can be put. The Ida Valley country gives a remarkable example of this. A few years ago the output of fat lambs from that district could be estimated in hundreds, while last year forty-four thousand fat lambs were trucked from Poolburn Railway-station. Dairying would appear to be the most profitable class of farming to which the small self-contained irrigated farm could be put, and there seems to be a reasonable prospect of a settler making a fair living by this method even with the ordinary herd of, say, thirty cows. The returns from cows in Central Otago are in many cases surprisingly high considering the long winter and short milking season, and these, no doubt, could be considerably increased by systematic culling and careful breeding. No other kind of farming offers such possibilities to the settlers on the smaller areas which can be served with a supply of water.

It is pleasing to note that farmers throughout Otago are going in more and more for improving their pastures by top-dressing, &c., and are also making great improvements in their stock, so that more stock and stock of a better class is now being carried.

The gradual spread of manuka scrub in certain parts of the district has been causing much concern of late years.

Freeholds.—An area of 2,521 acres, chiefly consisting of Crown leases, was purchased during the year, bringing the total area of freehold in Otago up to 2,310,628 acres.

Lands remaining for Selection.—Practically all the land in Otago which is at all attractive and suitable for settlement is held under one tenure or another, and there are very few areas available for disposal in the near future, about 4,000 acres of partially irrigable land on Pisa Flats, near Cromwell, being the only fairly large area immediately in sight. Some pastoral lands under Part VI of the Act will, as the licenses expire, provide for further settlers, and possibilities in this direction are being carefully watched; but, while both these tenures may be subdivision give opportunities of placing more settlers on the land, it is questioned in some quarters whether there would be any increased production.

Land Board Work.—Twelve ordinary meetings of the Land Board were held during the year, occupying on an average two days each month, besides four special meetings at Wanaka, Cromwell, Alexandra, and Oamaru respectively, and one special meeting at Dunedin. A large amount of general miscellaneous business was dealt with, besides 276 applications for land, 409 transfers, 19 applications for advances, and other matters in accordance with discharged soldiers. Several inspections were also made by members of the Board in connection with applications for land and other matters requiring special consideration.

Revenue and Arrears.—The total gross revenue from all sources (including Discharged Soldiers Settlement Account) during the year amounted to £262,058; the rent roll (including Discharged Soldiers Settlement Account) being £229,800, and the arrears of rent and postponements £43,111. This shows a slight decrease in arrears and postponements from last year of £2,184. Every effort is being made to bring about a reduction of these arrears.

SOUTHLAND.

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

The past year may be classed as generally satisfactory from a farming point of view; there were certain unseasonable changes at critical stages which acted against production and quality, but on the whole the settler came out well on the prices offering. The winter was mild, with no heavy losses on the high country, and good lambing percentages were reported on both high and low country. The prices obtained for wool-clips were satisfactory, although about £2 10s. per bale lower than the preceding year; also, it was reported that a good deal of tender wool was submitted at the sales, which