

MARLBOROUGH.

(P. R. WILKINSON, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

There were no new estates purchased during the year under the Land for Settlements Act. The season has been a favourable one, and it is evident that most of the settlers are on a sound basis. There are, however, still a few cases requiring adjustment, and these are receiving attention as opportunity permits. Taking the position generally, there is no doubt that, provided the settlers practise good husbandry and present prices are maintained, the success of the land-for-settlements holdings in this district is assured.

WESTLAND.

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

A number of estates have been offered for subdivision during the year, but for various reasons all have so far been declined. Estates previously purchased and settled have been notably successful.

CANTERBURY.

(W. STEWART, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

All the older-established settlements are so well established as to cause the Department little anxiety, for the settler's interest in the property is often as great as that of the Crown, and, as rental is one of the first charges against the property, our position is very secure. On these settlements, if any settlers are in trouble, it is usually due to having bought in at too high a goodwill, and their troubles are with the mortgagees. In the cases where rentals have been reviewed, as with small-grazing-run leases, the rentals have usually been considerably increased.

In the foothills settlements acquired just before the war there has been a good deal of discontent for some years past, but the legislation of last year has allowed these rentals to be reviewed, and rentals are now being adjusted in all cases where settlers apply.

No new settlements have been purchased during the year, but quite a number of properties are now on offer, and are being investigated by the Dominion Land Purchase Board.

OTAGO.

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

Most of the older-established settlements in Otago which were purchased at a time when advantage accrued from rising land-values are in a very flourishing state. Some of the less successful ones, however, together with some of the more recently purchased estates, have had their capital values and other charges reduced and adjusted by the District Revaluation Committee and by the Dominion Revaluation Board under the wide provisions for revaluation extended to settlers by recent legislation. Nineteen fewer settlers are in arrears with their rents as compared with the previous year. With these concessions it is considered that practically all the settlements are now on a payable basis, and, with few exceptions, settlers have very good prospects of success.

No new purchases of estates were made during the year in this land district. Several properties offered to the Crown are, however, at present under consideration.

SOUTHLAND.

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

There have been no purchases under the Lands for Settlements Act in this district during the past year. Some of the older settlements, which comprised somewhat indifferent land, are not making good headway. Concessions have been freely given in the past, and the position in some cases appears to be caused by indifferent farming. The position of these settlements could certainly be improved by more up-to-date methods of farming, by top-dressing, and giving more attention to the class of stock carried. The holdings have in many cases become very heavily mortgaged in the early years, and this has acted against the successful working of the farms.

Rabbits are very bad on some settlements, and it would seem advisable for the settlers to constitute local Rabbit Boards, so as to deal with this pest in some organized manner.

The past experience in the matter of the indifferent success of some settlements in the district can largely be attributed to the subdivision of land which required a large amount of capital for liming and manuring to ensure the increased carrying-capacity necessary to bear the increased charges by subdivision, the settlers taking up the land not having the available capital necessary. In this district there are excellent areas suitable for subdivision, which would ensure successful settlement provided some more definite arrangement could be made for financing the settler from the start.

A revaluation of Ermedale Settlement, which was selected in 1910, took place during the year, the settlers taking advantage of section 11 of the Land Laws Amendment Act, 1927, and a general reduction in most cases was approved by the Dominion Board. Fortunately, the majority of settlements are on land of good quality which has responded to good treatment, and the settlers are making headway.