

APPENDIX.

REPORTS OF COMMISSIONERS OF CROWN LANDS.

NORTH AUCKLAND.

(O. N. CAMPBELL, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

THE position with regard to the soldier settler has improved, due principally to the good season and the financial assistance granted in further improving and stocking his holding.

The result of the Dominion Revaluation Board's adjustments of land and mortgage values has tended to stability and has encouraged the soldier to further application to ensure success. Many of the men are now sufficiently established to warrant action being taken to transfer advances already made in Current Account for the purchase of stock and other chattels to an instalment mortgage chargeable against the land interest only. This will give the settler unrestricted control of his stock, &c., a concession which will encourage a policy of self-reliance in the management of his farm. The consolidation of charges in some seventy cases is nearly completed, and the work is being proceeded with as rapidly as possible. Many cases are not yet sufficiently strong to warrant the stock being freed, but, where possible, land and stock charges are being separated, and advances for improvements transferred to a new mortgage on a sinking-fund basis. The mortgagor is then placed in a position where every incentive is given him to strive to secure full control of his stock and chattel securities.

An analysis of the receipts for the year shows that the soldier farmers have held their own, while on house properties receipts have declined—reflecting the unemployment in the city.

Fewer transfers of houses and farms have been dealt with, these being principally in cases where financial necessity compelled the mortgagor to sell.

Abandoned Properties.—This year has been a very good one so far as farms are concerned, fewer having reverted to the Crown than in previous years. A steady demand for these properties has been maintained, and at the close of the year only ten farms remain on our hands. As a good proportion of these are, from their quality and means of access, almost valueless, the position is most satisfactory.

With regard to house properties the position is not so satisfactory. During the year fifty-four reverted to the Department and thirty-seven were redispensed of. Most of these houses are in Auckland and environs, but a few are spread over the country towns.

The total number of farms abandoned to date is 286, of which 276 have been reselected. The number of houses which have reverted to the Department is 194, of which 148 have been disposed of, leaving at present 46 on hand for sale.

Applications under the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act.—During the year the applications received totalled 446, which were made up of remissions and postponements, 65; transfer of farms, 45; additional advances, erection of houses, 22; transfer of houses, 57; Current Account, 285; miscellaneous, 72. The amount recommended on Current Account was £31,514.

AUCKLAND.

(K. M. GRAHAM, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

With the exception of a very limited number of settlers who will apparently never make good, although every inducement is still being held out to them, there is a very optimistic feeling that the administration of the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act has proved successful, and the appreciative reports from the settlers themselves is a good indication for the future.

The season has been an excellent one for both dairy and sheep farming, and there is every indication that present prices will be maintained.

In a considerable number of cases fairly large outside debts have been contracted in the purchase of grass-seed, manures, and fencing-materials; but where the valuation of the property, together with the personal element, has justified it, the Department has been enabled to make further advances on Current Account and taken over those liabilities at, in most cases, a considerable discount. This action has resulted in a considerable saving of interest charges to the settler.

With the expiration of the original period of Current Account mortgages—i.e., seven years—arrangements are now well in hand for the conversion of a portion, if not the whole, of the advance to an instalment mortgage bearing interest at the rate of $5\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., subject to rebate for prompt payment; and where the valuation does not warrant it, any balance is left on Current Account at 6 per cent., payable "on demand." Where the whole amount is so transferred the bill of sale over live and dead stock, where held, is being released. This action of the Department is very much appreciated, and is an inducement to hard work and close attention to farming operations. By the time the next report is presented I anticipate this work will have been satisfactorily completed.

The number and amount dealt with as at the 31st March, 1929, are as follows: Sixty-nine cases, £50,409.

With the exception of the few previously mentioned there should be no retrogression, although it will still be necessary to submit a few cases to the Dominion Revaluation Board for review of existing capital charges.

The several amounts of loans and advances outstanding as at the end of the financial year are: Farms, £877,928; Current Account, £553,620; dwellings, £370,884.