

During the past twelve months eight farms were abandoned or forfeited, of these six have been disposed of, and the others are now available. These comprise sheep-farms of 1,100 acres and 1,700 acres in the high country, and will be difficult to dispose of.

Hunter Soldiers Assistance Trust.—Regulations under the Act were gazetted during the year, and the Board, which was constituted in 1927, is now in a position to consider applications. Up to date none have been received.

TARANAKI.

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

Steady progress has been maintained by the majority of soldier settlers in this district. Markets have been favourable, particularly for lambs and young ewes. Cattle have also realized prices far in excess of values existing over the past few years. The spring demand for cattle for crushing on back-country farms is largely responsible for the keen demand for stores in this district, and operates to the advantage of the breeder. A number of grazier soldier settlers have also disposed of in-calf heifers to advantage this season owing to the keen demand for dairy stock.

Dairymen have had a successful year; and owing to the abnormal flush of feed very good provision by way of hay and ensilage has been made for the winter. The factory payments during the opening months of the season for both butter and cheese indicated a very satisfactory sale of produce, particularly for cheese. These prices have not been maintained throughout the season, but on the average the prices must be considered as satisfactory.

In various parts of this district a number of soldier settlers are experiencing serious trouble with the spread of ragwort. Closer subdivision and stocking with sheep is being encouraged to assist in coping with this pest, which is much in evidence on the lighter soils throughout the district.

The great majority of the soldier settlers are fairly well established, and the others are receiving every assistance possible to enable them to attain the same position. The benefits of concessions under the Deteriorated Lands Act are becoming evident, and have undoubtedly assisted a number of back-country soldier settlers whose properties have required special treatment.

During the past year fourteen soldier properties have been abandoned or made subject to foreclosure or forfeiture, while fourteen farm properties have been disposed of. There has been a fairly steady inquiry during the year for abandoned properties, especially for dairying propositions. There are 420 soldiers on farm properties who have received assistance under section 2 of the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Amendment Act, 1917, while 490 have been financed for house properties.

Including Current Account advances, a total sum of £1,168,452 2s. 5d. is outstanding, as follows: Advances on Current Account, £183,932 9s. 10d.; advances on dwellings, £310,645 13s. 1d.; advances on farms, £673,832 19s. 2d.; miscellaneous, £41 0s. 4d.

During the year the revenue amounted to £202,832 11s., while advances made totalled £112,494 13s. 6d. The arrears under each heading have been reduced fairly well during the year, and at present stand as follows: Farm properties, £8,455 3s. 1d.; house properties, £1,987 0s. 4d.; interest on Current Account, £1,391 9s. 5d. The reduction in the arrears is mainly the result of the good season experienced by the farming community generally.

During the year it was found necessary to exercise powers of sale in six cases of house properties, and thirteen resales were effected. Of late months there has been a slightly better demand for house properties, but there are still eight houses on hand.

WELLINGTON.

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

The observations made as to settlement generally in the Wellington Land District apply equally to discharged soldiers settlements, as these settlers are to be found in all parts of the district. Soldier settlers, generally speaking, are now on a fair footing, and by the adoption of common-sense methods of farming combined with personal energy are establishing themselves in reasonable comfort. Some cases are still to be reviewed, and adjustments to be made in regard to both areas and values, but these are not many.

Those soldier settlers who follow dairying have had a good year and have increased their outputs considerably. This has been accomplished mainly by top-dressing their pastures, and culling their herds where possible and replacing with better cows or by heifers reared from cows of tried worth.

Those who follow sheep-farming have also had a good year, and with prices remaining at last year's standard should have no difficulty in making good. These settlers are now feeling the benefits of the liberal concessions made by the Dominion Revaluation Board, and there appears to be no reason why the large majority of them should not become permanently established as successful farmers.

The amount received during the year by way of payments of interest and principal, &c., was £378,145 4s. 10d., a considerable increase over last year's figures.

NELSON.

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

The soldier settlers in the Nelson District continue to make steady progress. It is gratifying to note that nearly all the doubtful cases of a few years back are now on a fairly satisfactory basis as a result of various concessions, and should give little trouble in the future.

Wool cheques this year have been smaller than in the preceding year, but the difference has been made up by better prices obtained for surplus stock. No settler has had to retain aged or