

APPENDICES.

APPENDIX I.—SETTLEMENT OF CROWN LANDS.

EXTRACTS FROM THE REPORTS OF THE COMMISSIONERS OF CROWN LANDS.

NORTH AUCKLAND.

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

During the past year weather conditions adversely affected the farming community. Spring was backward, with cold winds, and consequently there was lack of growth. A dry summer followed and pastures suffered considerably. Hay and ensilage have, however, been saved to a great extent, but the crops were light.

Paspalum supplied the major feed during the dry weather, and all farmers are now sowing a paddock or two to keep their dairy herds up to normal production. The dairying industry has had a setback on account of the low price of butterfat. The returns due to increased production have not nearly equalled the fall in prices, and the payments received by the settlers are much below those of last year. This position may be further reflected in next season's returns, as a number of the farmers were unable to top-dress their pastures as liberally as in the past. The sheep-farmer has not had a profitable season. Wool and lamb values have not been such as to ensure payable returns.

The market prices for cows, dry cattle, and sheep have been the lowest for some time past. Notwithstanding this, there is a decided tendency to increase production by increasing and improving pastures and systematically testing and culling the herds.

Very few farms are changing hands, and the settler realizes that he must farm his lands in a scientific manner in order to obtain the best results and so combat the low prices received for his produce.

The demand for vacant land has continued to be keen, and much competition has taken place where blocks showing prospects of successful development have been opened for selection by ballot.

AUCKLAND.

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

Variable weather has been experienced throughout the season, commencing with unusually cold and dry climatic conditions in October and continuing in some parts of the district intermittently through the usual flush period of the year. Production of butterfat in some of our settlement areas has therefore been disappointing, but, nevertheless, the indications are that the continued practice of herd-testing and top-dressing will result in a larger production in the aggregate over the whole district, which will to some extent offset the result of the prevailing low export prices of our farm-produce. It is anticipated that the majority of the Crown tenants will thus be able to maintain their position, and carry on with better prospects ahead when the urgent necessity for equilibrium between prices and overhead costs is fully realized and becomes an accomplished fact.

Owing to the financial stringency, greater difficulty is being experienced this year by settlers in securing supplies of manure for autumn top-dressing, and the Land Board, ever mindful of the fact that under modern conditions of farming the maintenance of production and of capital and mortgage values is largely dependent on the adequate application of manure to pastures, has given full and due consideration to all applications for relief or assistance under this heading.

The menace of ragwort in some parts of this district is now becoming much more recognized by the farming community than hitherto, and this fact, together with the increased sales and application of sodium chlorate by the dairy-farmer, points to the fact that the spread of ragwort can be controlled and the weed economically eliminated if dealt with in time, and a careful watch kept over pastures throughout the year.

Another feature of the present season is the increased use settlers have continued to make of surplus grass for the purpose of ensilage, the production of which is proving to be such an essential part of farm economy, and its use both as supplementary feed for stock during dry spells of weather and throughout the winter months is proving in every way very beneficial.

The Crown settlers engaged mainly in sheep-farming and grazing are comparatively few in number in this district, but, in common with all other farmers in this class, they have worked at a heavy loss owing to the unexpected and unprecedented slump in wool, sheep, and cattle. All possible consideration and assistance will be given to tide them over the critical period which faces them, and when prices and costs again reach a state of equalization and stability, their position will no doubt be established on a better basis than when prices were fluctuating at high levels, and their prospects can for this reason be looked forward to with some degree of confidence in the future.

The demand for land during the year remained keen, and small farms suitable for dairying were always eagerly sought after.