

as well as the rest of the world has been passing. The heavy fall in the prices of our primary products has operated most severely on the sheep-farmer and the pastoralist. The dairy-farmer has had to suffer a reduction in the price of butterfat, but by the application of intelligence and industry and the use of fertilizers, he can increase his output, which, while it may not wholly compensate him for the lower prices prevailing, enables him at least to approximate the financial returns obtaining when prices were at a higher level. All land is not suitable for dairy-farming, and any land not capable of being utilized for dairying is better left undeveloped until economic conditions are more favourable. A very large proportion of lands now carrying sheep and beef cattle are eminently suitable for dairying, but as these lands are privately owned, their conversion to dairying can be left to economic pressure on the landowner.

*Bringing in Undeveloped Areas.*—In the past the purchase of such privately owned developed or partly developed lands by the Government for closer settlement necessarily called for heavy capital payments. At the present time the Dominion requires a scheme of land-settlement which aims at the development and bringing-in of land which is now undeveloped and unproductive, or only partially developed and perhaps retrogressing. Such a scheme has a twofold benefit in that it will provide immediately employment for the greatest number, and later settle and render productive land which at present is not adding to the Dominion's wealth. Under existing economic conditions land may be developed at costs which should enable it to pay its way at present price-levels. The question of land-tenure is important, and later we suggest a scheme which, without entailing heavy initial capital payments, contains provisions which will enable settlers to obtain the freehold under certain conditions.

Where is land to be found for such a scheme of land-settlement? We have commented above on the question of purchase of developed land for closer settlement. For the purposes of "youths' land-settlement scheme" our considered opinion is that, under existing circumstances, this settlement should not be promoted by purchase of developed lands which at present are being farmed efficiently. What areas of undeveloped Crown lands are available for land-settlement schemes? It has frequently been stated that there are no Crown lands suitable for development as dairy-farms. We venture to suggest that a considerable number of suitable areas could be found amongst the idle lands of the Crown if a stocktaking were made by men of experience and vision.

Assuming, then, that sufficient areas of suitable lands can be made available for the purpose of a land-settlement scheme—and we have every reason to believe that the requisite land can be found—it becomes necessary to formulate a plan. In the years between 1890 and 1905 much settlement was effected by means of the purchase of large estates for closer settlement on a leasehold tenure, but under present-day conditions the price at which this type of settlement could be carried out makes it a matter of considerable financial risk to the Crown and the settlers. Experience has shown that the cost of subdivision and roading added to the purchase price of the land renders it difficult to settle the land at a figure which will at once recoup the State and enable the settler to meet his rent and possible stock mortgages.

*Work on Land "in the Rough."*—The type of settlement which appears to be most likely to prove a success under existing conditions is one which takes the land in the rough—that is, in a wholly undeveloped state, and then under proper direction and supervision develops, stocks, and settles it with men who have been trained in farming and found efficient during the various processes of development. Sufficient areas of suitable land being available for development and settlement, experts could be requisitioned to prepare a plan of work with the estimates of cost of bringing the land to production and to lay out the work from time to time, say, twelve months in advance, taking the farming year from 1st July to 30th June. The labour to be employed on the development work should be recruited from suitable youths who have completed their technical training in an agricultural college or farm of instruction, or who have shown a partiality and aptitude for farming by their practical experience on a farm, or in the secondary school, agricultural school, or farm of instruction. A selection of suitable youths should not prevent any great difficulties, and any of those not proving satisfactory or efficient during the progress of development could be discharged as occasion required.