

APPENDICES.

APPENDIX I.—SETTLEMENT OF CROWN LANDS.

EXTRACTS FROM THE REPORTS OF THE COMMISSIONERS OF CROWN LANDS.

NORTH AUCKLAND.

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

Substantial increases in revenue are recorded for the past season in spite of severe drawbacks due to heavy and continuous flooding in North Auckland and a somewhat inclement season generally over the district. The revenue improvement is approximately 20 per cent. on the previous year's returns, due to the improved wool prices, and the increase in mutton and lamb prices. Beef has also maintained a payable price, and store cattle values have been fairly satisfactory.

The improvement would have been considerably greater if normal conditions had prevailed. Stock experienced a severe winter, and this was followed by excessive rainfall for several months, accompanied by severe summer flooding of low-lying areas. A plague of caterpillars followed and destroyed the grass over large areas which had suffered from flood.

Attention this year has been focused on the denudation of large areas of hill country of forest cover, and there is no doubt that this policy of past years has aggravated flooding in North Auckland. The abnormal rainfall during the past twelve months may not recur, but a number of Crown tenants have been given assistance on account of flooding and consequent damage during the past twelve months.

Stock-prices have increased all round due to various causes, such as heavy lamb export, the tendency of numbers of dairy-farmers to increase their sheep holdings, and the improved market for meat.

A large increase in pig revenue is a noticeable feature on most dairy-farms, and this avenue could be still further exploited if more attention were paid to proper housing and better feeding of pigs.

Orchardists suffered a disaster from gales in January and February, and extremely heavy losses have resulted. Not only was the fruit lost, but trees were blown down or wrenched to such a degree that some replanting is essential.

Potato-growers have experienced a good average year; a few have done very well indeed. Onion-growers have not had the same success financially.

Applications for revaluations under section 216 of the Land Act are now being received to an increasing degree, and it is anticipated that a fairly large number of tenants will avail themselves of this provision.

Operations under land-development have continued satisfactorily, and the advances made by the Board are generally in a sound position as to security value. Additional advances under this heading total £9,490 for the year.

Crown tenants are now looking forward with more confidence to the future in consequence of improved price-levels. Although there is need for a still higher level, the worst of the slump period is past.

AUCKLAND.

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

In contrast to the drought conditions which were experienced in the middle of last dairying season, copious rains have fallen throughout the whole of the present season. In actual fact the rainfall was greater than necessary and to a certain extent detrimentally affected the production of butterfat in certain localities. This was, however, offset by the improved prices ruling for butter and cheese, and dairy-farmers throughout the district have, on the whole, experienced a particularly good season.

Increasing numbers of our settlers are going in for pig-raising on sound lines and are obtaining more substantial returns from this sideline than hitherto.

Sheep-farmers also have benefited substantially by the very satisfactory prices realized for wool and fat lambs, while other classes of stock have also given a better return.

As a result of the better prices, a substantial increase in revenue is shown under practically all headings, and it is gratifying to find that most settlers are now making an honest endeavour to meet their current financial obligations to the Department.