WESTLAND.

(B. King, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The farming community in this district has had the benefit of a fairly successful season.

The climatic conditions, on which so much of their success or failure depends, have throughout been favourable, the rainfall, thoug hheavy during short periods, has been more uniformly spread than usual, and sunshine as a consequence has been slightly below the average. Temperatures have been uniformly of a high level, and as a result an abundance of feed has been produced, enabling plentiful provision to be made for the coming winter.

It is generally admitted that lambs have not reached the uniformly high grade this year that has pertained in former seasons, and the reason for this is somewhat difficult to determine. Production of butterfat has decreased slightly, but the increased prices have more than met the shrinkage in revenue brought about by this factor.

Fat cattle have reached good prices during the year, and this has led to increased interest being shown in this branch of farming.

The effects of river-erosion of some of the best grazing lands is a problem of great importance, and it is apparent that the removal of bush and vegetation cover from the higher lands surrounding the fertile valleys must be very strictly controlled in the interests of posterity. In this connection it is urged that a much greater amount of energy be shown in the destruction of deer and goats, which are having the effect of destroying the smaller vegetation on the alpine lands, thus encouraging much more rapid run-off of water and consequent damage to the river valleys.

An increased interest is being displayed in land-settlement this year, as is evidenced by the larger number of applications for land dealt with by the Land Board.

CANTERBURY.

(N. C. Kensington, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The past year has been a difficult one for settlers, on account of the varied weather conditions experienced. Although the winter was somewhat severe in the back country, with some heavy snow-storms, no great losses resulted, and sheep came through the winter well. The spring months of October and November were exceptionally dry, and feed received a severe check, crops suffering severely. Fortunately good rains early in December saved the situation, and grain and other crops recovered well, the subsequent threshing showing good returns. There has been considerable mortality amongst lambs, and difficulty has been experienced in fattening.

During short, dry spells the white butterfly and diamond-back moth attacked the turnip and rape crops, and these crops are not up to the average.

Those engaged in dairying have had a good season as regards returns of butterfat, and with the guaranteed price their position has been more stable.

The pastoralist and those largely dependent on wool have not received a good return, owing to the fall in prices, and the general position of the high-country man is becoming more difficult. The prices for fat lambs remained firm, and, as regards surplus stock, ewes brought good prices.

Irrigation-works are being pushed ahead in the South Canterbury district, and in places where the schemes are operating the results have been most encouraging.

A large number of small-grazing-run and pastoral-run leases have expired during the year, and renewals have been effected at satisfactory rentals.

The year generally has been a very busy one so far as the officers of this Department are concerned, and the generous relief being granted to many settlers under the Mortgagors and Lessees Rehabilitation Act should enable them to meet their obligations in the future provided their farming methods are in the right direction.

OTAGO.

(F. H. Waters, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

Following a wet summer, when the district received heavier and more frequent rains than usual, the 1937 autumn was comparatively mild, with the result that feed both natural and supplementary was ample for all requirements and stock came through the winter in good condition. The winter was not severe, there being no heavy falls of snow, and the weather generally being fine.

A serious setback occurred in the spring, when the whole district suffered from absence of rain. The North Otago district was exceptionally dry until December, when good rains came, but these were too late to save many of the cereal crops, which had to be eaten off to save stock. With frequent showers throughout the summer and autumn the district experienced a remarkable recovery, with the result that there was more feed than sufficient for usual requirements, and large numbers of stock were brought in from the southern districts.

Contrary to the weather experienced in the northern part of the district, South Otago suffered from a drought throughout the summer and well into the fall. As a result, grass pastures on undulating land were burnt up, forcing many farmers to look for outside grazing. The cereal crops were light, and the turnip crops in many places practically a failure. If a hard winter follows, difficulty will be experienced in wintering stock.

Central Otago has also experienced an abnormally dry season which has tested the numerous irrigation schemes to the limit, and water from these schemes when available has proved a boon to settlers. On the drier parts the yield from wheat, oats, and barley crops has been below normal but