

SESSION II.
1921.
NEW ZEALAND.

LAND FOR SETTLEMENTS ACT, 1908

(REPORT ON THE).

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly in compliance with Section 85 of the Land for Settlements Act, 1908.

The LAND PURCHASE CONTROLLER to the MINISTER OF LANDS.

SIR,—

Wellington, 1st October, 1921.

I have the honour to submit the report of the Department for the year ended 31st March, 1921.

Land for Settlements.

The number of estates offered was 204, of an area of 296,482 acres. This is only about half the number offered in the previous year. There were, however, a considerable number submitted direct to the Commissioners of Crown Lands of the several districts and considered by the local Boards, those recommended for purchase being included in the attached tables. The figures given herein do not include any purchases under section 2 of the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Amendment Act, 1917. The area purchased and settled by ballot, together with several properties purchased during the previous year but not settled, is 57,927 acres, of a value of £843,162. The area purchased for individual soldiers (114) under section 3 of the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Amendment Act, 1917, is 22,023 acres, of a value of £434,809. In addition, 7,539 acres, valued at £201,032, have been purchased, and have since been settled or are in course of disposal.

Although the areas offered are much below past years it cannot be said that there is any marked reduction in the prices asked. Dairying-lands are still very firmly held. It may, however, be said that very few properties are changing hands, therefore it is somewhat difficult to arrive at present-day values.

During the year part of Teviot was offered for settlement by soldiers, but with poor results. It would appear that the time is not opportune for the settlement of any pastoral country, therefore the better course would be to defer the settlement until times return to the normal. The Hillsprings Block, which adjoins Teviot, is now worked in with the latter.

The leases of the Mount Pisa runs having expired, negotiations were successfully completed with the owner of the freeholds for their purchase, with leaseholds retained, together with the live and dead stock, water-rights, fencing, &c. A determined effort is being made to reduce the rabbits, and as the country has been badly devastated it will be given a rest and a chance to recover.

The establishing and maintaining standard flocks of sheep suitable for the high pastoral country has been strongly advocated for years by those well able to advise. Occupiers of such country find great difficulty in getting suitable rams and young ewes for their purposes. The importance of keeping up the standard of our flocks on the high country cannot be overestimated, as it is upon these that the low country is dependent for breeding-ewes. The flocks generally throughout the Dominion, unfortunately, are not being maintained to the standard of former years. Both Teviot and Mount Pisa offer an opportunity for the making of a start in this direction: they are very suitable for the purpose. The suggestion is one well worthy of serious consideration.

The extraordinary and unforeseen slump in wool and stock which came about suddenly in the latter end of last year quite upset all calculations, and, unfortunately, has placed many of the soldiers holding pastoral country in a very awkward position. The prospects of an immediate recovery are far from bright, and it will be absolutely necessary to render reasonable assistance to tide over the difficulty. The bulk of the soldiers are reported to be doing good work, and to receive such a setback is most discouraging.