

Very good progress has been made in the dairying industry. To those settlers who have only been a few years on the land the natural increase of the dairy stock is now coming in, and building up the herds and the feeling of pride in the holdings is becoming more apparent. More attention is being paid to good sires, and a spirit of rivalry is existent among the owners.

One effect of the slump has been to bring home to settlers the absolute necessity of getting rid of stump and old grass in favour of crops and good pasture, and improvements in this direction are very noticeable in the recognized dairying portions of the district. With the prospects of obtaining a final result of 6d. to 9d. per pound more for his butterfat than last year the dairy-farmer can start next season with a better heart.

Sheep-farmers have had a good season, but in this branch the well-established man, whose flock had been kept up by natural increase, benefited at once by the rise in wool, mutton, and lamb. The smaller man, struggling under financial difficulties, has practically been living on lamb-money for the last two years, with the result that his sheep have deteriorated, and it will take some time yet to educate him to the observance of the two sources of income—viz., wool and surplus stock. There is in too many cases an inclination to deal instead of to farm. Rape and turnips are sown, and when ready for feeding off, instead of being sold as fattening-crops to men whose business it is to deal, the settler haunts the sales to pick up stock cheap, and he runs too many risks.

Orchardists suffered by unseasonable hail and heavy winds in the early part of the season, but gratifying results have been obtained from the apple and pear crops, the main complaint being, however, that prices were too low.

Generally there is more buoyancy, men are in better spirits, and it is felt that at least the hem of Fortune's garment is now firmly within their grasp.

*Revenue and Arrears.*—The total revenue for the year was £293,667, of which £115,879 was received for the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Account. The total number of tenants at the close of the year was 2,300, occupying an area of 1,102,034 acres, carrying an annual rental of £214,014. The amount of arrears on the 31st March was £88,494, owing by 490 selectors. This last amount is somewhat terrifying, and gives some indication of how the district suffered from the slump. Every possible action has been taken to collect arrears, and the failure has been a source of great anxiety to the office and the Board. Apparently there has been a tendency on the part of a great many men to "mark time" until the findings of the Inquiry Board are known; and it is somewhat unfortunate and very misleading that the majority of the settlers affected consistently use the term "Revaluation Board." Revaluation to them has generally one meaning—viz., reduction. A great portion of the money can undoubtedly come in and is a good asset, but it is little use discussing the position until the Inquiry Board has reported.

*Lands opened for Selection.*—The lands offered comprised forty allotments, containing about 60,680 acres, of which 4,151 acres, representing seventeen allotments, were available exclusively for discharged soldiers, and sixteen of these were selected. Four education reserves, with a total area of about 1,520 acres, were disposed of to four civilians. Six town and suburban lots, containing about 35 acres, were sold at very satisfactory prices. The Tahora Blocks, of about 18,603 acres, comprising seven holdings, and situated near Motu, in the Gisborne district, were offered twice—the second time under the Bush and Swamp Act, for general selection—but no applications were received, despite the fact that there was very considerable local agitation to have these lands opened. Five pastoral runs, with an aggregate of about 35,435 acres, were also unsuccessfully offered at auction in Napier. The demand for anything but good land has quite fallen away.

*Land Board Work.*—Eighteen meetings of the Board have been held at Gisborne and Napier, and the total number of items dealt with was 961. Although this is a great falling-off from the figures of the last few years, it is noticed that consideration of the business is not relatively shortened, as so much of the soldier work requires close consideration.

The personnel of the Land Board has undergone great changes during the year. Mr. George Wright, who had been a member for fourteen years, resigned owing to his departure from the district. Mr. Lachlan McKay, with eight and a half years' service, resigned through illness in December, 1922, and, to the great grief of all who knew him, died the following month. Mr. A. J. Cameron, the East Coast representative for ten years, resigned, as he will be a resident in the new Gisborne Land District. All of these gentlemen were enthusiasts in the work of the Board, and their knowledge and judgment were of inestimable value to the Crown.

*Lands remaining for future Selection.*—At present there are about 68,740 acres of surveyed lands available for selection, but of them some 35,435 acres represent pastoral runs which have been offered unsuccessfully at auction and will shortly be open for application. Another 18,603 acres, being the Tahora Block, is not likely to prove very attractive, and a large portion of it may be set aside for State forest purposes. The Waihora Block, of 1,460 acres, comprising three holdings, and the Waipiro Block, of 6,068 acres, in eight holdings, although surveyed, have been held back pending adjustments of the Native titles, but will be opened at a suitable date in the coming year. These blocks are first-class open grazing-lands. The Tapatu Block, of 6,089 acres, in seven or eight sections of bush lands, would have been offered during the past year but for the very heavy cost of providing road access. The remaining lands open for selection are two forfeited holdings, containing together about 1,087 acres; and it is very probable that from time to time other forfeited sections will be reoffered.

During the year a most satisfactory consolidation of Native interests on the east coast has resulted in the herein-mentioned Waipiro Block being available for selection, and further consolidation of the many varied interests held by the Crown is in progress. The work involves an immense amount of careful manipulation, but all the expense and trouble should be justified by results. In the southern part of the district the Crown interests in Native blocks are all under lease, and probably no action but further buying is required for some time.