

*Tarakohe Cement-works.*—These works were closed for a considerable time, but latest reports say that they are to resume in the near future. The information is welcomed by the district generally.

*Onakaka Ironworks.*—These works, though not yet in a productive state, were just about to be opened when they were partly destroyed by fire. Besides the delay thus caused, considerable expense was incurred, but repairs have been effected, and other necessary works are now completed or under way, including road-formation and the erection of a wharf at the mouth of the Onakaka River. It is anticipated that the furnaces will be again lighted at an early date, and a start made with the smelting.

*Land Board.*—Twelve ordinary meetings of the Land Board were held during the year, these meetings extending altogether over nineteen days. The total number of items dealt with was 1,404. Besides the ordinary meetings the Board held a special meeting at Arika on the 7th October, 1922. After inspecting a large number of holdings in that locality which are going back into fern, and on which the settlers state that they cannot make a living and pay rent, the Board decided that the properties inspected were similar to many other bush sections, and that there was no good reason why the special concessions asked for by the settlers should be granted.

*Revenue and Arrears.*—The revenue received for the year totalled £83,535 19s. 10d., of which £49,342 3s. 3d. was on account of discharged soldiers settlement mortgages. Postponements granted during the year were: Rent, £1,028 17s. 11d.; instalments and interest on account of discharged soldier settlers, £9,386 10s. 11d. Arrears at the 31st March, excluding postponements still in force were: Rent, £6,603; instalments and interest on account of discharged soldier settlers £31,171 0s. 11d.

*Selections under the Regulations for the Occupation of Pastoral Areas in the Westland and Karamea Mining Districts.*—Sections of unsurveyed areas under these regulations are fairly numerous, but the position is not altogether satisfactory. Although licensees have no right to the milling-timber on their selections, they resent the disposal of the timber to sawmillers or others. Many selections appear to have been made in the past with the object of securing the timber thereon by exchanging the pastoral license to renewable lease or acquiring the freehold.

*Roads.*—The state of the roads in the backblocks of the Nelson Land District is a great handicap to the settlers. The opening of blocks for settlement of unsurveyed land some years ago without any provision for roads, or in other cases with inadequate amounts for roading, has caused much hardship, and the settlers have to ask for grants out of the Public Works Fund to make or complete the roads. The granting on free selection of land under the regulations for the occupation of pastoral areas in Karamea and Westland Mining Districts also causes trouble as regards roading, as the selections are in most cases in remote localities away from roads, and the settlers are continually approaching the Department for road grants. The large increase in the cost of forming roads in recent years makes the opening of blocks almost impossible, as the cost of the roads in some cases is greater than the value of the land.

*Lands opened for Selection.*—The policy adopted during the year was to open only lands that were likely to be selected and that had reasonable means of access. The demand, however, was very small, and many of the sections made available remain unselected. At the present time there are indications that the demand for suitable holdings is increasing.

## WESTLAND.

(W. T. MORPETH, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

*Conditions and Progress of Settlement.*—For the year ending 31st March, 1923, the weather conditions in Westland on the whole, from a farming point of view, were good. The winter months were exceptionally fine. Spring and summer have been fairly wet, but mild, so that conditions have been favourable for the growth of grass throughout the district. Turnip crops for winter feed have been generally successful. The cultivation of these crops is a well-established practice in the district, and the necessity and importance of this provision is being impressed upon the soldier settlers. The season has been bad for hay. The production of ensilage is a matter to which the attention of the farming community throughout the district is recommended.

As in other parts of the Dominion, dairying is one of the principal resources of Westland, but though the output of cheese and butter has doubled in the last four or five years, and though the industry is still a gradually expanding one, its development in south Westland has hitherto been impossible for the want of regular and practicable means of communication. There are at present eight dairy factories in the district—the Overland, Fresh Food and Ice, Kumara, Arahura, Kokatahi, Waitaha (cheese), Harihari (cheese and butter), and Wataroa (cheese and butter). These factories are in full operation, and the number of suppliers is slowly on the increase. The Wataroa Factory is the farthest south, but by opening up means of communication the industry is capable of considerable development in the southern portion of the district. Between Wataroa and the Paringa River, and, farther south, from the Waitoa (or Maori) River to the Cascade River, there are extensive river-flat and foreshore areas capable of carrying dairy herds. These lands at present are used for grazing purposes, and the areas available could be increased by the reclamation of considerable swamp lands, and the possibilities in this direction are now being carefully investigated. A vigorous development policy would necessitate the extension of the railway from its present terminus at Ross as far as Waiho (widely known as an alpine and tourist resort), the construction of a motor-service road from Waiho to Bruce Bay, and the construction of a motor road from Jackson Bay northward to the Waita River. If these works were carried out there would be nothing to prevent the establishment of dairy factories throughout south Westland. The country around Jackson Bay, which is a good harbour—in fact, the only harbour on the west coast—could be served by steamer to Greymouth, and the present unsatisfactory steamer service dispensed with, while from Bruce Bay northwards produce would be carried by road to Waiho.

It is noteworthy that some large consignments of butter were shipped this year to America. These sales occurred at a somewhat critical period, and undoubtedly helped to stabilize the market.