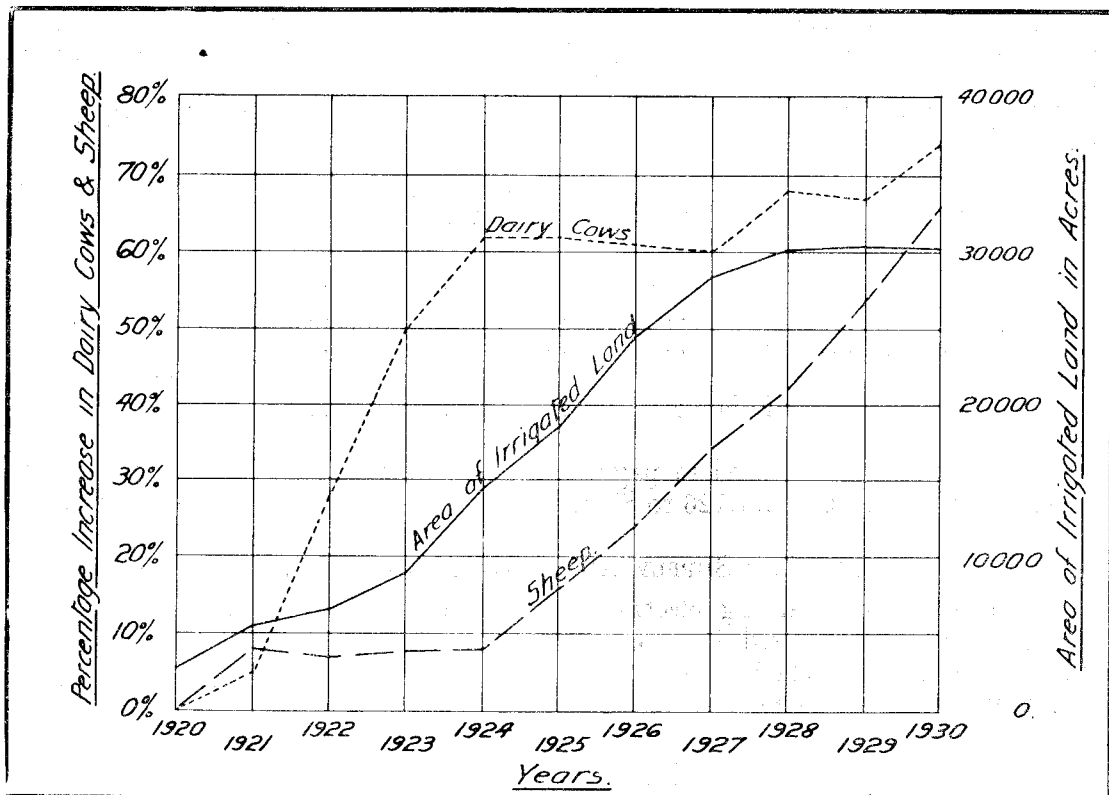


£981,688. The total area at present irrigated under the eleven completed schemes is 42,672 acres, and the irrigators under these schemes number 408. It is interesting to note that the total land owned by farmers who irrigate the 42,672 acres under the Government schemes is approximately 250,000 acres, or six times the area irrigated. The rates charged for water range from 5s. to 14s. per acre, the average being approximately 10s. per acre. The present average is 7s. per acre, due to the fact that the system of rating is based on a graduated scale varying from 1s. per acre in the first year to the full rate in the fifth or sixth year.

On account of the difficulties through which the farming community is at present passing as a result of the period of depression, difficulty is being experienced by my Department in collecting payment for water-supply. The amount of rates for last financial year, including the rates unpaid during former years, amounted to £18,787, and of this amount a sum of no less than £12,933 yet remains unpaid. From a departmental point of view the position regarding unpaid rates is unsatisfactory. It is evident, of course, that the low price-level is largely contributing towards this difficulty; but, even so, it is considered that in many cases there is no justifiable excuse for non-payment, and it seems apparent that greater pressure must be brought to bear to obtain payments of arrears, some of which have been outstanding for a considerable period. While every effort has been made to collect these outstanding rates, it became apparent to me that, as other Government Departments were in a somewhat similar position regarding outstanding amounts due to existing conditions, whatever action was taken by my Department in regard to unpaid irrigation charges should be in conformity with the action taken by those other Departments, and that the Government's policy should be of a uniform nature. Arrangements have therefore been made for the Otago Land Board, which has been handling the question of rent unpaid by Crown tenants, to investigate each case of unpaid irrigation charges and report to me, after consideration of the irrigator's ability to pay, its recommendation as to whether payment should be enforced, rebated, or postponed.

The following graphs indicate conclusively that the benefits resulting to this district from irrigation are considerable, and the indirect return to the Consolidated Fund as a result of increased production would appear to fully justify the capital expenditure involved in the schemes.



GRAPH SHOWING AREA OF LAND IRRIGATED AND INCREASE IN DAIRY COWS AND SHEEP IN VINCENT COUNTY.

No. 1.—OTAGO CENTRAL IRRIGATION.

The above graph indicates that from 1920 to 1930 there was an increase of 74 per cent. in the number of dairy cows, and an increase of 66 per cent. in the number of sheep in Vincent County.