

1895.  
NEW ZEALAND.

“LAND FOR SETTLEMENTS ACT, 1894”  
(REPORT ON).

*Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly in compliance with Section 39 of “The Land for Settlements Act, 1894.”*

SIR,— Department of Lands and Survey, Wellington, 18th June, 1895.

I have the honour to report on the transactions under “The Land for Settlements Act, 1894,” for the twelve months ending the 31st March, 1895.

During the year under consideration alterations were made in the Act which very much extended its operations, the principal changes being, first, to give power to deal with lands acquired in the same areas as under “The Land Act, 1892”; second, to empower the taking compulsorily of estates in cases where no agreement can be come to between the owners and the Governor; third, to increase the amount that can be spent in any one year from £50,000 to £250,000; fourth, to reduce the numbers of the Board for each land district to three members, instead of four. There are other alterations also, but the above are the principal ones. During the latter portion of the period under review the Boards have had the valuable assistance of Mr. James McKerrow as Inspector, whose reports on the lands offered and advice given to the Boards have been of great service.

The Boards met to consider the cases referred to them by the Governor or (under the Act of 1894) by the Minister, as follows: Hawke’s Bay Board, 1 meeting; Wellington Board, 6 meetings; Westland Board, 3 meetings; Canterbury Board, 7 meetings; Otago Board, 2 meetings; Southland Board, 3 meetings.

A large number of offers of land were received during the year—in fact, double the number received the previous year, the figures being—1894, 102 offers; 1895, 208 offers. The area offered was 1,075,239 acres. The land covered by these offers varied in quality very much indeed, some being good, and situated in localities where lands are wanted; but in a large number of other cases the properties were not suitable for the purposes of the Act either in quality, position, or price.

The following are the particulars as to estates purchased up to the 31st March, 1895: To 31st March, 1894, five estates, area 9,113 acres and 14 perches, cost (including roading and expenses to date) £39,966 6s. 7d.; to 31st March, 1895, three estates, area 5,991 acres 1 rood 1 perch, cost (including roading and expenses to date) £25,290 15s. 9d.: total, £65,257 2s. 4d. At that date arrangements had been made to purchase five other estates, aggregating an area of 28,819 acres, at a price of £102,515, without cost of roading, surveys, &c.; but, as surveys, deeds, &c., were not completed by the 31st March, particulars will only appear in next year’s report. These estates are “Maerewhenua,” in Northern Otago, part of the Merrivale Estate, in Southland, a section near Opawa, Christchurch, a small section near Kurow, on the Waitaki, and a block on the Hurunui, Northern Canterbury. All of these have been taken in hand for survey and roading, where necessary, to be ready by the date the lands come into possession of the Government. In addition to the above, the Board recommended the acquisition of 4,237 acres, being part of the Ardgowan Estate, near Oamaru; but, as the owners declined the price offered them, it has been decided to take the land under the compulsory clauses of the Act. Proceedings in connection therewith are now in hand. The following offers made by the Government have been accepted since the 31st March, but purchases are not yet complete; Opouriao Estate, 7,604 acres, near Whakatane, Auckland; a section of 21½ acres near Te Muka; another section of 27½ acres near Fendalton; 20 acres near Waikari, North Canterbury; and 105½ acres near Seadown, South Canterbury—or a total of 7,778 acres,—the approximate purchase-money of which will be £27,789.

Out of the eighteen estates recommended by the Boards for purchase, the offers made to the vendors in eleven cases were declined, generally on the ground that the price offered was insufficient; the Ardgowan Estate is included in this number.

A considerable amount of settlement has taken place on the lands which have been opened for selection, as will be seen from the tables attached; but in two cases—those of Pomahaka and Blind River—all of the lands have not yet been selected. Of the six estates purchased, and which