

In regard to the very large number of applications for this and the Maerewhenua Estate, and the balloting therefor, I may refer you to my remarks under the heading "The Ballot System."

The eagerness with which the two estates referred to were applied for is an indication of a still unsatisfied demand for land of good quality in the North Otago District, and there can be no manner of doubt that if further estates of a suitable character were acquired there they would quickly be taken up.

In conclusion, I may venture to point out what is, doubtless, already patent to you—namely, the necessity of exercising a close inspection of all estates acquired and disposed of under the Land for Settlements Act, in order to insure a proper compliance with the stringent conditions under which such lands are leased and held. To do this as it should be done will, as further estates are acquired, involve, as I have already stated, more time and attention than the present staff of Rangers can consistently with their present duties give to it. The Ranger's staff must therefore be increased if the work required of it is to be efficiently performed.

The Staff and its Work.—The staff has been kept very busily employed during the year, and only with the utmost exertion has it been able to keep the work from falling into arrear. My remarks of last year as to the increasing volume of departmental work are equally appropriate at the present time, and the following list will furnish some approximate idea of its scope and extent during the year just closed: Applications of various kinds, 2,279; audit-cards prepared and sent to Auditor of Land Revenue, 327; correspondence—letters and telegrams—inwards, 5,401; outwards, 4,036; defaulters dealt with, involving about 1,500 notices, 750; forfeitures of holdings, final, 35; holdings made freehold, 81; leases and licenses completed and sent out—in triplicate, 294; in duplicate, 136, equal 1,154 sheets; meetings of Land Board, 75; minutes of Land Board—number of entries, including 342 ordinary applications dealt with, 1,736; notices of various kinds sent out, including those for rent, 5,000; reports on applications for Government advances, 53; returns of various kinds, 300; sale-plans and pamphlets distributed, 10,000; schedules of land for notification prepared, 43; schedules of "thirds" and "fourths" to local bodies, in duplicate, 105; surrenders, including exchanges, 185; titles, schedule in duplicate, 170; transfer of holdings, 68; transactions under Pastoral Tenants' Relief Act before mentioned; weekly copies of cash-books, &c.

I may also add that a considerable portion of the time of one of the principal officers has been taken up with goldfields work in connection with the Warden's Court for Hindon, in respect of which I have communicated with you by a separate memorandum.

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CROWN LANDS RANGERS' REPORTS.

The work of inspecting the numerous holdings under the various tenures of the Land Act has been vigorously prosecuted during the year. About eight hundred holdings held on settlement conditions were visited and inspected. Two hundred and sixty-nine reports and forty-five statutory valuations of improvements made; besides a large number of reports in connection with applications for loans under the Advances to Settlers Act, and applications for land under the Mining Districts Land Occupation Act. Much of the Rangers' time has been taken up in reporting on mining and other reserves, commonages, &c., besides a large number of reports of a miscellaneous character in connection with the business of the Land Board.

The land purchased by Government under the Land for Settlements Act for settlement purposes has also occupied much of the Rangers' time; and I have forwarded reports of the progress of settlement on these estates, viz., Pomahaka Estate, Maerewhenua Estate, Te Anaraki, Puketapu, and Tahawai settlements; also the Swinburn Farm Association Block, in Block VII., Swinburn District. These reports will, however, speak for themselves.

The progress of settlement throughout the land district has advanced fairly well during the year, and the conditions of the Act are, with few exceptions, being complied with. The results of the different tenures have been as follows:—

Deferred Payment.—This system is gradually being reduced by purchase or exchanging to lease in perpetuity. Conditions of the Act well complied with.

Perpetual Lease.—Many exchanges are being made from this system to lease in perpetuity, chiefly to gain a reduction in rent. The conditions of the Act are mostly complied with, except in some cases where the land is very rough and of a poor character.

Lease in Perpetuity.—This is now a favourite tenure. The improvement conditions are fairly well complied with, excepting in outlying districts where, from the want of roads, the residence conditions has not yet taken place.

Occupation with Right of Purchase.—The improvement conditions under this tenure are well complied with.

Village Homesteads on Perpetual Lease, Lease in Perpetuity, &c.—This system is working very satisfactorily. The conditions generally are being complied with, and the selectors well satisfied with their holdings.

Small Grazing-runs.—Land suitable for this class of settlement is much sought after by shepherds and graziers of small means, and when suitable land can be found and laid off in blocks fit to carry from 1,500 to 2,000 sheep it is eagerly taken up. The improvement conditions under this tenure are well complied with.

Village Special Settlement.—This class of settlement is progressing very satisfactorily. In most cases the selectors are well satisfied with their lot. The conditions of the Act are well complied with.

Swinburn Association Block.

This settlement comprises an area of 2,955 acres, divided into fifteen sections, giving an average of 197 acres to each settler. Improvements to the value of £1,778 are now on the land, as compared with £1,202 last year. This settlement is progressing very well. The land is good, well watered, and, when the Otago Central Railway is completed to Ryan's crossing, will be close to railway