

Reserves.—The area reserved for various purposes during the year amounted to 7,004 acres, of which 6,930 acres represent lands in Queen Charlotte Sound and Port Gore, which have been surveyed and set apart for landless Natives.

Number of Selectors on the Books.—These now amount to 429, being an increase of fifty-one over last year.

Lands selected under Sections 114, 115, and 117 of the Act.—There were not any selections under section 114. Under section 115 the area selected was 3,091 acres, under lease in perpetuity; and under section 117, 10 acres, for cash.

Rangers' Inspections.—This return shows that 237 properties were visited during the year, having an area of 90,227 acres. The value of improvements required was £27,257 12s. 3d., and the value of the improvements actually made £60,694 14s. 6d., the excess over the requirements being £33,437 2s. 3d. There were only two defaulters—one for non-residence, and the other for both non-residence and non-fulfilment of improvement conditions.

Land for Future Settlement.—The areas which I anticipate will be opened for selection during the coming year are as follows: 7,000 acres in Queen Charlotte Sound, under the optional system, and about 30,000 acres on the north bank of the Wairau River, 20,000 acres of which will be offered as small grazing-runs and the balance under the optional system. In the southern part of the district are situated the Kaitao and Puhipuhi Blocks, which will shortly be ready to be placed in the market. The former block contains about 10,000 acres, and the latter 20,000 acres. It is proposed to offer 20,000 acres as small grazing-runs, and the remainder under the optional system. These blocks, which are of very fair quality, will, it is expected, be readily disposed of. There is also a small grazing-run of 3,600 acres near the Clarence River, which will be offered as soon as it is ready, and a block of 4,000 acres near the Greenhills Station, which will be disposed of by auction for cash.

C. W. ADAMS,

Commissioner of Crown Lands.

WESTLAND.

Summary of Land taken up.—An area of 77,225 acres was open for selection under the various tenures during the past twelve months. Of this area, 392 acres have been taken up, leaving an available balance of 76,832 acres at the end of the year.

Cash.—The total area disposed of under this only amounts to 80 acres, the bulk of the selectors electing to acquire their holdings under other systems.

Deferred Payment.—The area occupied under this system remains as last year. A considerable reduction by conversion to freehold is anticipated during the coming year, and when readjustment of areas washed away by Teremakau River is completed the present arrears will be overtaken.

Occupation with Right of Purchase.—Only two selections have been made under this heading.

Lease in Perpetuity.—With the exception of one selection on the Poerua Estate, no land has been taken up on this tenure.

Land under Land for Settlements Act.

The Poerua Estate is the only one in this district that has been acquired under the Act, and it has been all taken up with the exception of one section, which is liable to a heavy overflow from a neighbouring creek. This settlement is assuming a prosperous appearance; large areas have been cleared of bush, grassed, and fenced. The estate carries considerable flocks, and there are no arrears of rental.

Pastoral Runs.—It will be noted from the tables that the area held under this heading amounts to some 511,000 acres, the bulk of which is bush country, and used for the rearing and fattening of cattle. A smaller portion is occupied by sheep, of which increasing numbers are being placed on the mountain pastures. Under the 219th section of the Land Act of 1892 forty selectors have taken up 3,482 acres during the year within the Midland Railway Reservation, this being the only way any land can even be temporarily acquired within that area. Inclusive of the above we have now 157 selectors, occupying 25,270 acres, on this tenure, the whole of whom are prepared to acquire their holdings under one of the more permanent systems as soon as the Midland Railway question is settled. Besides these, there are large numbers of applications for sawmilling areas which are held over for the same reason. Despite the wetness and severity of last season, and the low prices ruling, the district has distinctly progressed. On the 31st March the arrears are much lower than ever before, and since that date large amounts of rentals have been received from the outlying districts.

The Crown Lands Ranger reports that during the year the amount of timber cut in the Westland and Nelson Districts has increased, on account of the large export trade carried on. The figures below show the quantity exported, but do not represent the whole of the output, as there are several mills cutting on freehold property, to the books of which the Ranger has no access. The timber trade is still on the increase, as is shown by the new sawmills that are being erected, chiefly in the Nelson District. Holdings under lease in perpetuity and occupation with right of purchase are steadily improving, being well within the requirements of the Act. The Ranger has made his usual inspection in South Westland during the year.

Timber cut on Crown Lands, Nelson.

Red-pine, 5,335,000 ft., at 3d. per 100 ft., £666 17s. 6d. Silver-pine, 1,250,433 ft., at 6d. per 100 ft., £312 12s. 2d.

Timber cut on Mining Blocks, Nelson.

Red-pine, 449,649 ft., at 3d. per 100 ft., £56 4s. 2d. Silver-pine, 78,581 ft., at 6d. per 100 ft., £19 13s.