

to 8,027, and the plans indorsed on the latter, and copies also, totalled 12,679; 203 tracings and diagrams were prepared and furnished to the Land-tax Department; and the public requirements generally were duly attended to. As far as practicable and the limited staff allowed, compilation and record maps were constructed and kept up; though much is left to be desired in this respect, as the index and general maps of the operations in this branch are a cause of anxiety and inconvenience in several of the offices.

The various offices were kept exceedingly busy, and especially was this the case in the chief centres. It is fortunate that the Department is represented by several experienced and capable officers in the Land Transfer branch of the Survey Department.

The recommendations I had the honour to make last year regarding extending standard surveys have not been found practicable of adoption. In the interests of owners of property, and the Land Transfer Department, the absolute necessity for such surveys is admitted on all sides; the difficulty, common to most undertakings, is want of money. Formerly the Survey Department carried out resurveys and standard surveys of towns and rural lands, to facilitate the bringing of lands under the Land Transfer Act. Without such a basis the Act could not have been put into operation, except at great risk to the Assurance Fund. Of late the pressure of surveys urgently required to open land for settlements has put a stop to standard traverses.

It has been found in some instances—notably in the case of the City of Wellington—that standard work executed with great care, exactitude, and cost to the Survey Department has not been appreciated or preserved with sufficient care; the stations of such surveys have been removed or disturbed, and rendered worthless as points of reference for former or new surveys and titles. This deplorable result has been caused by the breaking-up of the streets in the prosecution of public works such as drainage, putting-down of water and gas mains, &c. Responsibility for such disturbance, and the maintenance of the standard points of reference, is sometimes disputed. It appears very desirable that the Government and local bodies should agree as to their respective responsibilities and obligations. One of the most urgent requirements is that all the standard points in cities and towns should be marked by concrete blocks, and iron or other suitable covers, to indicate their location and facilitate reference.

#### EXTENSION OF EXISTING CITIES AND TOWNS, AND NEW TOWNS.

There has been considerable activity in the subdivision of private property, especially in the Auckland, Taranaki, and Wellington Land Districts. When such lands are subdivided for “towns,” differences of opinion and difficulties arise as between the owners of the land and the Survey Department, in consequence of the indefiniteness of the law and regulations upon the subject of what constitutes a “town,” and how far the Department is justified or authorised in questioning the schemes of streets and allotments, and also in requisitioning for compliance with conditions which appear to be necessary in the public interest. It has been advanced on the part of the private owners that the idea of the Government dictating to the freeholder how he should divide his land is “monstrous, and would not, under the existing law, be tolerated if referred to a Court of law.” The Department has been informed that feeling runs high about the “unwarrantable interference with private property,” and that “claims for damages against the Government for delay in approving the schemes are likely to be made.”

The fact is that the claim is advanced that each private owner is at liberty to subdivide his property just as he pleases, with few or many streets, no matter whether such streets are all necessary, or fall in with the general scheme, or fit in with existing or future highways, and without consideration as to the public interests.

The law governing the subject of surveys of towns or private property comprises “The Land Act, 1892,” sections 17 and 18; and references as to surveys, &c., in sections 4, 8, and 13; and “The Regulations for conducting the Survey of Land in New Zealand” issued under section 4 of the said Act. But private properties fall more especially under “The Land Transfer Act, 1885,” section 170 thereof being important, as it empowers issue of regulations by the Surveyor-General (with the approval of the Governor in Council) “for insuring the accuracy of plans and surveys required under this Act, and to cancel and alter such regulations when and as necessary.” There are also the regulations issued under this Act, which incorporate the Land Act regulations above. Besides, we have the Public Works Acts of 1900 and 1901, which govern the widening of existing streets, &c. It must be admitted that the foregoing state little definitely as to powers to control schemes and