

Surveyor-General until Mr. Marchant's leave expires, on the 30th June, the Government felt they were conferring a well-earned honour upon an old and valued officer, and one which would give universal satisfaction to the staff.

The completion and presentation to Parliament of the report of the Commission appointed to investigate the land administration has enabled the Government to feel assured that from one end of New Zealand to the other the public are satisfied with that administration. It also gives ample justification for the placing on record in this annual report that in every land district in New Zealand our Commissioners of Crown Lands are doing splendid work, and that the tactful and careful way in which they carry out their multifarious and onerous duties is worthy of all commendation. When it is considered that the Commissioners of Crown Lands are dealing with nearly twenty-four thousand Crown tenants, who must in the nature of things at times be possessed with the idea that they have grievances and that the Commissioners and Land Boards are of course the cause, it speaks well for the whole of our officers that so few complaints (when investigated) have any real ground, and are more often than otherwise the fault of the settler himself.

The system of administering the Land and other Acts by the Land Boards for each land district, though perhaps more expensive than a Land Board for each Island, has this very great advantage—viz., that it gives the opportunity to each settler to come before the Land Board in his district, without any very great expense to himself, and ventilate personally his grievance, and it also keeps the whole of the Crown tenants in the land district in touch with the Land Board. With regard to the Land Boards themselves, ever since the general conference, held last year between the Minister, the Commissioners of Crown Lands, and the several Land Boards, a more liberal and less hard-and-fast manner of interpreting the various Acts has been observed, and from length to breadth of New Zealand the Land Boards have done their best to assist the Government in carrying out the law in the most liberal spirit. They have also kept in touch with the settlers by making personal visitations amongst the more scattered and far distant settlements, which has done more than anything else to bring about a good understanding between the Land Boards and settlers.

ADMINISTRATION.

As there has been a widely expressed wish that the public should be made aware, through the pages of the annual report, as to what are the duties of the Lands Department generally, and what Acts are administered by it, herewith is appended a synopsis, which it is hoped will convey in some not altogether inadequate manner the information which is sought.

Synopsis.

Crown Lands for Settlement.—Classifying lands after survey; arriving at correct valuations; reserving areas for education, forest, scenic, recreation, and other purposes; consideration of proposals by Land Boards; preparing schedules, descriptions, and posters of lands thrown open for selection; gazetting and advertising lands.

Applications.—Receiving applications from intending selectors (50,000 applications annually); attending to same; recording, examining, and bringing before Land Board; holding of ballots for land; notifying applicants in connection with various processes; entering all particulars in land registers, ledgers, and other books; preparing and executing leases, licenses, certificates of title, and occupation, &c., of lands taken up under various Acts.

Dealings.—Receiving and attending to some 2,000 applications to transfer, mortgage, sub-lease, surrender, and otherwise deal with land; forfeitures, applications for loans to settlers under Advances to Settlers Act.

Inspections.—Required of all lands held under lease from the Crown; making valuations of improvements effected; seeing that regulations and conditions are complied with.

Local Bodies.—Preparing and supplying schedules of amounts accrued to credit of and available for expenditure on roads; examining and approving proposals for expenditure; preparation of descriptions, &c., of rating districts for special loans under Local Bodies Act.

Publications.—A Crown Lands Guide for each district is revised and issued quarterly, some 17,000 copies being distributed annually. The Settlers' Handbook is revised and issued to all parts of the world. Land-sale posters, pamphlets of each settlement, summaries of Crown lands available for selection are issued at intervals.

Acts and Statutes.—The following list of statutes regulate the duties of the officers of the Lands Department, and a knowledge of their provisions is essential to the proper performance of their functions: "Land Act, 1892," and amendments; "Land for Settlements Act, 1900," and amendments; "Bush and Swamp Crown Lands Settlement Act, 1903"; Crown Tenants' Rent Rebate Act; "Workers' Dwellings Act, 1905"; Land Transfer Acts; "New Zealand State Forests Act, 1885,"