

Coal and Mineral Leases.—The output of the Westport Coal Company's mines at Coalbrookdale and Millerton amounted to 571,556 tons, being an increase of 71,325 tons over the output of last year. The royalties collected on coal by this office reached the sum of £14,671 19s. 7d. 627,109 tons of coal was shipped from the Port of Westport during the year. The Westport Stockton Coal Company has started operations on their property, and in the near future the export of coal from Westport will be very considerably augmented. Under the power conferred on the Commissioner of Crown Lands by section 166 of "The Mining Act, 1905," I issued three mineral prospecting warrants, with the concurrence of the Hon. the Minister of Mines, over an area of 2,050 acres in Aniseed Valley, close to Nelson City.

Endowment Lands.—The following leases over the Westport Harbour Board Endowment lands were issued during the year: Eleven lease-in-perpetuity holdings, covering an area of 4,792 acres; fourteen leases of Westport town sections; fifteen timber-cutting licenses over 1,023 acres; and one license under "The Mining Districts Land Occupation Act, 1894," over 20 acres.

LANDS TO BE OPENED DURING THE YEAR 1907-8.

It is proposed to open 52,485 acres of unsurveyed Crown lands and 4,451 acres of land acquired under the Land for Settlements Act. The Crown lands comprise the following blocks: viz., a compact area situated from about seventeen to twenty-two miles south of Murchison, and known as "Mid-Marua," containing 21,750 acres; "Warwick," containing 5,821 acres; "Rappahannock," containing 7,109 acres; and "Glenroy," containing 13,127 acres. All of the blocks mentioned will be opened as unsurveyed bush lands on lease in perpetuity, excepting Glenroy, which will be offered under the regulations for the occupation of lands within mining districts. In addition to the blocks just named, the Maungatapu Block, [situated about 12½ miles from Nelson, and containing 2,632 acres, will be opened on the optional system; an area of 2,046 acres in the Inangahua Survey District will be opened for selection on lease in perpetuity. The total area of Crown lands to be opened is 52,485 acres. The area to be offered under the Land for Settlements Act is the property recently known as the Wangapeka Run, situated in the Sherry Valley, about two miles from the Tadmor Railway-station. All these lands are ready for immediate occupation.

An effort will be made to throw open a splendid block of country containing about 1,500 acres situated thirteen miles from the Town of Murchison, and locally known as the Blackwater and Mangles country.

RANGER'S REPORT.

The Ranger visited 144 properties held on the lease-in-perpetuity and occupation-with-right-of purchase tenures, covering an area of 72,607 acres. The value of the improvements required by law on these holdings is £10,977; the improvements actually effected by the tenants amounted to £28,253. The number of defaulters in respect to improvements is nineteen, and in respect to non-residence thirty-four. There are a considerable number of holdings yet to be inspected, and an effort will be made to carry on the inspections continuously during the year. The Ranger reports as follows:—

"In Sounds County the number of leasehold sections inspected was forty-seven, comprising an area of 24,938 acres. Value of improvements required by law, £4,471; improvements effected, £15,627, being £11,156 more than statutory requirements. Number of defaulters for improvements, 4, and for non-residence, 11.

"In Collingwood, Takaka, and Waimea Counties the number of leasehold sections inspected was eighty-six, comprising an area of 41,297 acres. Value of improvements required, £6,372; value effected, £12,261, being £5,889 more than statutory requirements. Number of defaulters for improvements, 9, and for non-residence, 18.

"Buller and Inangahua Counties: Eleven leasehold sections were inspected, comprising 6,372 acres. Value of improvements required, £134; improvements effected, £364, being £230 more than statutory requirements. The number of defaulters respecting improvements, 5, and for non-residence, 5.

"With regard to pastoral licenses under the regulations for the occupation of lands in mining districts, very little has been done in improving the lands, the area cultivated being 120 acres. I expect, however, that considerable improvements will be made during the current year.

"As the result of the visits which I have paid to Crown tenants in the course of my duty, I am able to say that the selectors are very well satisfied with their holdings, and that the land is being settled in a *bona fide* manner. Generally speaking, the district has progressed very satisfactorily. There has been a great demand for land, and very great improvements have been made by freeholders as well as by Crown tenants. All Crown lands opened for selection have been keenly competed for. The high prices obtaining for sheep, wool, and other classes of stock and products are offering inducements to people to clear and cultivate the land, and many are turning their attention seriously to pastoral pursuits.

"Speaking of the newly settled country in Central Buller, during the last year over 3,000 acres of bush have been felled, and I am pleased to report that in nearly every case the Crown tenants have had very successful burns. So pleased are they with their selections—the cleared land having taken the grass so well—that by the end of the current year a very large area of bush will have been felled in this locality. Everything considered, the Crown tenants are very prosperous and content. The approximate number of stock depasturing on leasehold lands is as follows: 32,000 sheep, 1,500 cattle, 170 pigs, and 200 horses."

REVENUE.

The total gross revenue received from all sources, including rents from the Westport Harbour Board endowments and royalties on coal and timber, amounted to £25,937 18s. 10d.