

The volume of business transacted is not nearly so much as last year, the sales for cash having fallen off, and the selections under the leasehold tenures being only about half the number. Had the land been available, no doubt the results would have been very much larger, but towards the end of 1907 every available section was taken up, and there were no new lands ready to offer.

The revenue proper last year was £25,523, which would have been maintained had there been more sales for cash, these always being a fluctuating quantity.

CROWN LANDS OFFERED FOR SELECTION AND DISPOSED OF.

The area open for selection on the 31st March, 1907, was 54,590 acres, and 11,033 acres were offered during the year, making a total area of 65,623 acres available. Out of this, 52 selections were made, comprising an area of 44,969 acres, and 3,755 acres in addition will be returned next year. An area of 9,211 acres was withdrawn for reoffering under "The National Endowment Act, 1907," and 3,888 acres were also withdrawn to be reoffered under "The Land Laws Amendment Act, 1907." This leaves 3,800 acres open for application at the close of the year.

The only land offered for the first time were seven allotments in the Ohura and Heao Survey Districts, comprising an area of 1,859 acres, which were keenly competed for. The remainder of the sections offered were forfeited holdings in various parts of the district.

The remaining sections in the Huinga Settlement, near Toko, three in number, were taken up, but one was abandoned for no apparent reason. Applications have already been made for it.

Five reserves were offered for lease by public auction, and all were taken up.

Two sections, totalling 3 acres, were sold as sites for dairy factories—one at Nihoniho and the other at Aria—under the provisions of section 62 of "The Land Laws Amendment Act, 1907."

The land offered for cash by public auction consisted of eighteen allotments in the Town of Manaia, eleven being disposed of at upset prices.

There has been such a steady demand for land during the year that there is now practically none open for selection.

PRINCIPAL SYSTEMS OF TENURE.

These are confined to the occupation with right of purchase and leases in perpetuity, and when lands were offered under the optional conditions the preference was given to the former tenure, as the following figures will show: Occupation with right of purchase, 45 selections, area 42,150 acres; lease in perpetuity, 1 selection, area 755 acres; cash, nil.

CONDITIONS AND PROGRESS OF SETTLEMENT.

The evidence of substantial progress over the whole of the Taranaki District has been very marked during the past year. The report of the Ranger for the central and southern part of the district discloses that good progress is being made, and with very few exceptions the improvements effected are in excess of requirements, the holdings inspected being 330, having a total area of 121,188 acres. The required improvements by the Act were valued at £48,014; the improvements actually effected were valued at £97,323.

The Ranger for the northern and more lately settled part of the district reports having visited 406 holdings, comprising an area of 140,241 acres. The requirements of the Act were improvements to the value of £22,597, and the value of improvements actually effected was £74,411. He remarks that the non-fulfilment of required improvements is generally due to the scarcity and high cost of labour. He also reports the first cattle-sale at Maticre on the 19th April, when 800 head were sold. Three schools and several post and telephone offices have been opened during the year, and a doctor is now resident at Mangaroa.

REBATES OF RENT.

During the year 800 tenants holding under lease-in-perpetuity and occupation-with-right-of-purchase conditions of the Land Acts were granted 10 per cent. rebate on their annual instalments, amounting to £985 2s. 4d., and thirty-two land-for-settlements tenants received a rebate of 10 per cent., equal to £250 18s. 2d. These figures show an increase of twenty-five selectors and £191.

ARREARS OF RENT.

Excluding the current instalment, the number of tenants in arrear was sixty-one, as compared with fifty-five last year; but the amount owing was £323, as against £465, a decrease of £142. Taking into consideration the current instalment, a substantial decrease is shown both in number of tenants in arrear and the amount owing—viz., 182 selectors, £1,487; last year, 229 selectors, £1,923. It is, however, only by constant attention and occasional resort to legal proceedings that this fairly satisfactory position can be maintained.

FORFEITURES AND SURRENDERS.

Twenty-one holdings under ordinary conditions of the Land Acts were resumed during the year—two less than the previous year—mostly for non-improvement. In some of these cases the forfeiture was consequent on the unfitness of the intending settler to battle with the usual hardships of frontier settlement, in addition to the sometimes inadequate road access and inability to obtain assistance in bushfelling. The difficulty in obtaining the services of bushfellers at anything like a reasonable figure has become most pronounced during the last two years. Some of the selectors also of recent years have not been possessed of sufficient capital to work their holdings, and there has been too much