

ending 31st March, 1909, and increasing by large amounts each year. During that time there has been an increase of 7,396 income-tax payers, equivalent to 315 per cent. There is also to be taken into account the increase in incomes of those in-employment, and who do not contribute anything to direct taxation, which the Commissioner of Taxes estimates at an average of 10s. per week all round, and this is certainly a low estimate, which amounts to a very large sum in the aggregate. These figures will convey some idea of the enormous development and prosperity of the country during the past fifteen years, which alone has contributed the increase in revenue from direct taxation, and this may be attributed to a large extent to the expenditure of public money in opening up the country, without which it would have been impossible. During that time there has been no increase in the rates of income-tax, but on the other hand large concessions have been made from time to time.

POST AND TELEGRAPH DEPARTMENT.

The revenue of the Post and Telegraph Department again shows a material increase, having reached no less a figure than £913,995. All the principal sources—viz., postages, telegrams, and telephone exchanges—have materially contributed to the £91,356 by which the previous year's revenue was exceeded.

As in the past, concessions have led to increased business. Money-order and postal-note commission, which was reduced by 50 per cent., shows 75 per cent. of the previous year's revenue.

This, considering the largeness of the reductions, is most satisfactory.

I estimate that at least £938,000 revenue will be received during the current year.

LAND REVENUE AND SETTLEMENT.

The total land revenue from all sources was £696,375. This is £37,581 more than the previous year, which I informed you in last year's Budget had been the largest received by the Department. The territorial revenue amounted to £222,856, and the revenue received as rentals from the lands dealt with under the Land for Settlements Act was £237,831. The sum credited to "Territorial" is less than in previous years, as a portion of the moneys hitherto credited as such now belongs to the National Endowment Fund. The amount received for this latter fund during the past year was £76,222. It is estimated that the gross land revenue for the year 1909-10 will amount to the sum of £659,000, of which £224,000 will belong to "Territorial."

The number of Crown tenants at the close of the year was 25,204, an increase of 1,108 during the year, the area held being 18,264,083 acres. The area disposed of during the year for immediate sale for cash payment was 42,176 acres to 371 purchasers, the amount received being £41,689. In addition to the disposal by immediate sale, the freehold was acquired by 232 holders of deferred-payment, perpetual-lease, occupation-with-right-of-purchase, and lease-in-perpetuity holdings to the extent of 55,372 acres. The total area selected during the year on settlement conditions—that is, exclusive of pastoral and miscellaneous holdings—was 521,145 acres, by 1,863 persons.

During the current year the work of preparing Crown lands for settlement is being energetically pursued, and it is believed that the transactions and number of settlers will compare favourably with the figures of the past year.

LAND FOR SETTLEMENTS.

Five estates were finally acquired and opened for close settlement during the past year at a cost, with incidental expenses, of £382,426. Up to 31st March, 1909, 1,195,292 acres were purchased at a cost of £5,146,999, with a further expenditure of £452,680 for expenses incidental to the acquisition and subdivision into smaller farms and construction of new roads. This large investment shows rents, &c., received £1,710,032, and interest paid £1,331,980, for the whole period—a satisfactory financial result, especially as it is obtained from a