

In the Auckland Land District there were three settlements, containing 86 sections, with an area of 12,941 acres, for which 358 persons applied.

In Taranaki there were two settlements, containing 122 sections, with an area of 20,085 acres, and for which 247 persons applied.

In the Wellington Land District, 102 sections, containing an area of 14,418 acres, for which there were 550 applicants.

The total number of sections was 310, containing an area of 47,444 acres, for which there were 1,155 applicants.

#### LICENSING LEGISLATION.

I propose to introduce important amendments of the Licensing Act. I have for some time past been impressed by the fact that the existing legislation is not sufficiently in accord with the basic principles of democracy, and material alterations in the law will be made both to further these principles and to provide a fair measure of consideration for those whose material interests will be greatly affected by these proposed alterations. I have recognised that such important changes as those contemplated would have difficulty in becoming law, especially this session, in connection with such a contentious subject-matter as licensing legislation; and, appreciating this difficulty, I have taken steps, through the good offices of one of my colleagues, to induce the two great parties to this question, independently through their recognised representatives, to modify their full demands for, or opposition to, certain proposed amendments. In this aim, I am glad to say, the results have been entirely successful, owing to a spirit of reasonable and honourable concession on both sides. The proposals therefore in the legislation I intend very shortly to introduce have already obtained the express approval of both the parties referred to, and I have been requested by each, independently, to pass this proposed legislation into law this session. Should the legislation contemplated be passed no further amendments of the law will, it is believed, be required for several years to come.

#### RACING LEGISLATION.

The attention of the Government has been called to the conditions under which Galloway and pony races are conducted, and is of the opinion that they should be stopped; and the House will be asked to do so. The number of race-meetings held throughout the Dominion are too numerous, and proposals will be submitted to limit them; at the same time the House will be given an opportunity of deciding what form of betting is to be allowed on racecourses. Sport, racing or otherwise, carried out legitimately is deserving of support, so that those who enjoy it as a pastime or recreation may do so. The best way to do this is to remedy any flagrant abuses that may exist.

#### NEW LAND PROPOSALS.

As I intimated earlier in the session, legislation will be introduced with a view to a more satisfactory settlement of the land question. In New Zealand the land question differs essentially from the same question in the Motherland. There, where the soil is almost entirely in private hands and the State holds practically no lands available for disposition, the question is mainly one of taxation, as illustrated by the Budget now before the Imperial Parliament. Here, where the Crown is the owner of immense areas and still holds great tracts of country yet unalienated, the question is not one of taxation, but of settlement tenure and limitation of area, and affects Crown lands only. It is desirable to keep this distinction in view in considering the land proposals I am about to outline. These will impose no tax or other obligation upon existing rights of private landed property. They will take from no man any interests he now possesses or burden any land now leased or acquired from the Crown. Every man who now owns a freehold is entitled to it, and under no conditions would the State be justified in taking any step to weaken his freehold tenure. In dealing with the disposal of its lands the State should observe two great principles—first, suitably close