

DEPARTMENTAL.

The amount of office-work is steadily increasing, owing to the continual advance of settlement, as will be seen by the following details. The volume of correspondence totalled 29,199 letters, &c. The total value of stamps used on departmental business amounted to £162 7s. 9d. Vouchers dealt with represent an expenditure of £23,308; in addition to which the usual numerous notices, dispatches, &c., of the routine description were dealt with.

Several land-ballots have been held during the year, of which special mention can be made to those of the Piripiri Block (held at Dannevirke), Waimarama (at Hastings), and Tutamoe and Moanui Blocks (at Wairoa); the number of applicants in each instance being clear proof that the demand for Crown lands is still very keen; and it is pleasing to note that the applications were confined to persons possessing the necessary qualifications for admission to the ballot.

During the year the Land Board held twenty-two meetings, including several special meetings held for the examination of applicants for lands referred to in the above remarks.

In closing this report, which will be the last I shall have the honour of preparing, owing to my retirement from the service, I desire to express my sincere thanks to all the officers of the Hawke's Bay staff for the manner in which they have carried out their respective duties, and to assure them that I fully appreciate the way in which they have assisted me in conducting the business of the office; and in parting with them I desire to tender them by best wishes for their future advancement in the service.

HENRY TRENT,
Commissioner of Crown Lands.

TARANAKI.

SETTLEMENT OF CROWN LANDS.

The new transactions show an increase in number of selectors, but less area, than last year, the principal sales being town lands for cash; and the selections under leasehold tenure being occupation licenses with right of purchase and renewable lease. It is noticeable that whenever the option is given, the occupation-with-right-of-purchase tenure is the one generally chosen.

The last of the deferred-payment holdings was converted to fee-simple, but the conversions from occupation with right of purchase to freehold are not numerous, considering the number of holdings eligible for that purpose.

The revenue shows an increase of £2,568, principally from cash sales and rents of leases in perpetuity, the latter being caused by transfers of land upon which the rent had been originally conceded under section 127 of "The Land Act, 1908."

Up to the present date nine leases-in-perpetuity tenants have given notice of their intention to acquire the freehold of their leases, but, the majority of them being held subject to section 135 of "The Land Act, 1908," the right of the tenants to acquire the freehold is awaiting the judgment of the Supreme Court.

CROWN LANDS OFFERED FOR SELECTION AND DISPOSED OF.

The rural lands offered under optional conditions comprised eighteen sections, of a total area of 11,363 acres, scattered over the land district, of which only one section, of 521 acres, remains unselected.

Under the renewable-lease tenure nineteen sections of national endowment land in the Ohura and Piopiotea West Survey Districts, comprising an area of 14,747 acres, were offered, and all taken up.

Thirty-five allotments in the Spotswood Settlement and one in the Huinga Settlement, comprising a total area of 461 acres, were reoffered, but only two allotments, of a total area of 10 acres 3 roods 10 perches, were disposed of.

The demand for rural land is still so great that a block is no sooner opened than it is eagerly applied for.

In the Towns of Mangaroa and Aria and Villages of Matire and Tatu eighty-two allotments were offered, and quitted at very satisfactory prices.

The leases of seven subdivisions of the Opunake Railway Reserve, one recreation reserve near Eltham, and Native-school sites at Mawhitiwhiti and Pariroa, were offered and disposed of, and a section of 2 acres near Hawera was sold by public auction at the upset price.

CONDITION AND PROGRESS OF SETTLEMENT.

The Ranger for the northern portion of the district reports on the settlement around Tongaporutu, and states that the settlers appear to be holding their own, having taken every opportunity of extending the areas of their farms, either by taking up adjoining land or selecting other land close by. Most of them in that locality depend upon dairying for their living, though the country is not all suited for that purpose. There are portions of this locality which would give better returns of produce when the roading facilities have been improved.

Eastward from Tongaporutu to Mangaroa the new country continues to make good progress, and yielded an increase of exported produce. In the more northern portion of the district the progress has been very steady, the last sale of stock having given double the results of two years ago. There is every indication that this portion of the country will export a considerable amount of dairy produce in the near future; indeed, there are already three butter-factories established, which, owing to various reasons, are not yet working to their full capacity. The few small sawmills in this part of the district have been unable to cope with the demands made upon them. Postal and telephone services are being extended to the outlying settlements, and naturally will prove of the