

## INSPECTIONS AND RANGERS' REPORTS.

The total number of the inspections made by the Rangers in the east coast district amounted to 883, covering an area of 111,310 acres, being a decrease as compared with the figures of last year. The improvements required to be effected amounted to £46,117 in value, whereas an amount of £127,501 was actually spent, being £81,384 in excess of requirements.

On the west coast district the two Rangers made 414 inspections, the area being 125,591 acres. The value of the improvements required to be effected was £31,419, but £114,326 was actually expended, being a surplus over requirements of £82,907.

## FORFEITURES AND SURRENDERS.

These were very light, being only four altogether, which indicates a fair compliance with Land Act requirements, and also contentment on the part of the tenants.

## "THIRDS," "FOURTHS," AND "HALVES."

The allocation under "The Land Act, 1908," of the proportion of rent from Crown lands under various systems of tenure, and of timber and flax royalties, has been made, and the sum of £12,794 17s. 9d. has been paid to the respective local authorities for expenditure on approved proposals for roadworks and under hypothecation certificates. This shows a considerable increase over last year's payments.

On the 31st March, 1909, the sum of £9,827 11s. was in the Receiver's Deposit Account at credit of the various local bodies in the Wellington Land District.

A change has been made in the method of dealing with local bodies' proposals, with a view to facilitating the work. Until quite recently settlers were asked to give their consents in writing to the proposed expenditure of "thirds" accrued on their holdings. These being obtained, the proposals were examined, and submitted to the Land Board for consideration and approval. Settlers were thus able to delay the expenditure by refusing their consent, frequently without good cause, and I have therefore dispensed with this requirement. Proposals are now being examined on the ground by an officer of this Department, and if they are found to be fair, having due regard to the claims of the settlers concerned, they are submitted at once to the Land Board for approval. This arrangement has proved very satisfactory, and promotes settlement by helping local bodies to give better access to tenants.

## CLERICAL.

During the year 15,000 letters were received, and 45,820 were despatched. These latter included letters, telegrams, rental and other notices, lithos, plans, &c., the grand total received and despatched being 60,820. There were 797 cheques, amounting to £7,169, drawn on the Imprest Account, the total number of vouchers dealt with being 1,512, for £46,658.

In conclusion, I have to express my thanks for the able and loyal assistance I have received since I took charge of this district on the 1st May last from the Chief Clerk and all the subordinate officers. My duties, coming into a new district again, have been much lightened by the aid always cheerfully given.

JAMES MACKENZIE,  
Commissioner of Crown Lands.

## NELSON.

## CONDITIONS AND PROSPECTS OF SETTLEMENT.

The year just closed has been a satisfactory one, both as regards the area of land disposed of to new settlers and the improvements effected on lands already selected. The seasons were propitious for bush settlement, consequently a comparatively large area of forest was felled and burned off. The activity with which the year opened is unabated—the demand for land continues, and the prospective settler is of a good type. Evidence of the general progress of closer settlement in this district is furnished by the clearings noticeable on the recently selected bush lands, and the extension of the grazing areas on the older selections, the forest-clad hills having given place to green pastures. This is very gratifying, for it is evidence of something done under rather adverse circumstances. The peopling and profitable occupation of backblocks situated as are those of Nelson, distributed in comparatively isolated areas over a wide stretch of country, and many miles distant from a railway-station or seaport, is a problem in the solution of which the chief factors are patience and strenuous labour on the part of the selector and facilities for settlement in the nature of road and railway construction afforded by the State. That these factors now obtain in this district to a reasonable extent is, I think, beyond doubt. Here and there a selector falls by the way. He is, however, in most cases one who expects the State to do everything for him, forgetful of the fact that the State cannot furnish brains for the incompetent, industry for the indolent, or perseverance for the half-hearted. The weeding-out process is applied carefully and judiciously from time to time to undesirables who fail from one cause or another, with the result that the *personnel* of the selectors is improving, all the vacated areas being readily selected by men of a good stamp; thus the foundation of settlement is being laid firm and solid. A pronounced steadiness, satisfaction, and optimism characterises the new settlers, and it is therefore safe to assume that the year just entered upon will see an advance on the preceding year. This prediction may be hazarded in respect to the bush settlements in the Central Buller. These settlements extend