

In the middle and South Canterbury districts most of the Crown lands holdings have passed beyond the period of statutory supervision, but it can be stated that these holdings are generally in good condition and well improved, and are being satisfactorily and successfully occupied. On some of the hill holdings south of the Rangitata River considerable deficiencies exist in the value of improvements effected, although what has been done is in most cases sufficient for the reasonable working of the holdings, which are frequently devoid of any suitable sites for the establishment of homesteads.

The old village settlements in all parts of the district are in good condition, the improvements well maintained, and the holdings still serving usefully to provide homes for men finding employment in their respective localities.

FOREST AND SCENIC RESERVES.

There has been an almost entire absence of damage by fire to the forest, scenic, and other reserves throughout the district, and it is a pleasure to report the assistance received from settlers in protecting these reserves and forests. The danger of fire increases with the augmentation of population, and more constant supervision becomes necessary, although it is fair to add that fires are more often caused by carelessness and want of thought than by any spirit of wanton destructiveness. Ranger Buckhurst suggests a means of protecting the smaller and prettier of the scenic reserves by planting shelter-belts of makomako and other native shrubs which have vigorous growth and are difficult to burn.

LANDS TO BE OPENED.

The lands to be opened during the ensuing year will include the six blocks, comprising 82,100 acres, which were set aside for disposal as small grazing-runs out of the pastoral runs dealt with under the recent classification. Five of these runs are situated in the Mackenzie country, and one near Lake Coleridge.

An area of about 48,700 acres in the basin of the Upper Rangitata River which has hitherto been occupied as part of the Mount Peel Station has been made available by exchange with the present occupiers, and this area, which comprises excellent pastoral country generally lying well to the sun, will probably be offered under the small-grazing-run tenure early next year, with possession on the 1st March, 1912.

The other lands to be offered will consist principally of estates acquired under the Land for Settlements Act, two of which, comprising an area of 2,873 acres, are already advertised for selection on 25th April, while a further area of about 3,600 acres will be offered about the middle of June.

DEPARTMENTAL.

The second biennial election of a Crown tenants' representative on the Land Board was held on the 27th August, 1910, and resulted in the return of the sitting member, Mr. J. Sealy, by a large majority. The number of voting-papers returned was 1,176, out of over 2,500 sent out, and, as the voting involves no further trouble than the filling-up of the voting-paper and its return to this office, it seems fair to conclude that the privilege is not greatly prized by the tenants.

The total number of ordinary and special meetings of the Board held during the year was twenty-five. The number of statutory applications for land received and considered was 894, of which 123 were granted. These, however, except in the case of newly offered lands, form a very small proportion of the business laid before the Board, the bulk of which consists of the numerous applications for transfer, questions of fulfilment of conditions, applications for special temporary concessions, &c., which are inseparable from the large and ever-increasing tenantry of the district.

The amount of land which has been offered during the year, involving considerable distribution of plans, replies to inquiries, &c., besides the subsequent increase of correspondence with new lessees, have all contributed to an increase in the volume of work, which has kept the staff steadily engaged during the year.

In the office of the Receiver of Land Revenue, besides the total revenue for the year, amounting to £156,248 9s. 10d., for which 6,304 receipts were issued, a sum of £40,097 was passed through Deposit Account, against which 1,099 receipts and refund vouchers were issued. In the Accountant's office, 456 vouchers, representing a sum of £3,130 15s. 10d., were drawn against the Imprest Account, and 247 vouchers, representing £12,087 10s. 3d., were passed through for pre-audit and payment.

In conclusion, I have much pleasure in reporting that I have received most valuable co-operation and willing assistance from all the officers in conducting the business of this branch of the Department since my arrival here last August, and the Chief Draughtsman's and Chief Clerk's knowledge of their duties has aided me very materially in keeping it up to date.

T. N. BRODRICK,
Commissioner of Crown Lands.

OTAGO.

Speaking generally, the past year has been a fairly prosperous one for Crown tenants, for, though the drought experienced in North Otago pressed hardly on some of the land-for-settlements men, both dairy-farmers and sheep-farmers, the average wool-clip was very good, grain crops and root crops fair, and prices satisfactory. This, following on a successful year, has enabled the settlers to pay up arrears, and holders of perpetual leases and occupation-with-right-of