

Taking into consideration the drawbacks resulting from the fact that there is no tenure available that makes adequate provision for the permanent occupation of lands that are supposed to be of an auriferous nature, the progress of settlement during the past year has been very satisfactory. The majority of the settlers are doing their utmost to make their holdings productive to the fullest extent, and it is satisfactory to find that their efforts are being well rewarded. The improvement of the dairying herds is receiving due attention, and the results obtained from the importation of high-class pedigree stock are very gratifying. Inspections made of 456 properties (not including any land-for-settlements holdings) by the Crown Lands Ranger during the year show that improvements have been effected to the extent of £67,098, an amount almost £50,000 in excess of the actual requirements.

On account of settlement being in what may be termed the early stages of development, the Land Board has in the past dealt with tenants very leniently in the matter of compliance with the conditions of their leases, with the object of affording them every opportunity of bringing their holdings into such a condition as to provide a reasonable living; but with the advent of new dairy factories the time has now arrived when conditions should be somewhat strictly enforced, as there is a very keen demand for land, especially in those localities, and it is unreasonable that land suitable for dairying should be allowed to lie unoccupied or idle. The members of the Land Board are unanimously of opinion that the policy mentioned should now be pursued.

A system of administration amounting to a certain extent to free selection has been pursued in this district in the past, as the conflicting mining and timber interests have prevented the offering of blocks of land for public application, no secure tenure being available. This system has produced very satisfactory results, and after inspection of the various localities I am of opinion that the policy should be continued, although this course entails an immense amount of extra work, as each separate application requires a special report and consideration on its merits. During the year such applications involving an area of upwards of 20,000 acres have been dealt with.

The revenue shows an increase of £2,780 over the previous year, and I anticipate that the coming year's operations will result in still further increase. A review of the figures for the past five years discloses that during that period the area held under lease has increased from 729,160 acres to 1,433,820 acres, and the revenue from £15,323 to £22,887. These figures provide unmistakable evidence of progress, which I am confident will continue.

In conclusion, I would beg to tender my best thanks to the staff for their efficient co-operation in the duties appertaining to the various branches of the Department.

H. D. M. HASZARD,
Commissioner of Crown Lands.

ROAD AND OTHER WORKS IN RUNANGA TOWNSHIP.

As the roads or streets necessary to give access to the occupied sections in Runanga, totalling about five miles, have been previously constructed, the work for the past year has been principally confined to drainage, repairs, and maintenance, and the necessary odd works to keep things in order until the proposed borough is properly formed. These works have been satisfactorily carried out under the supervision of the overseer, who has been in charge for several years. The following are some of the principal works: Side drain on grade, McGowan and Seddon Streets, 40 chains; timbering and boxing same; erection of dam and gauge-box in Raleigh Creek for flushing drains; maintenance, repairs, and partial gravelling of five miles of streets; all creeks and side drains cleared out and deepened, 6½ chains road made and gravelled to police camp; 3 chains formed and metalled for access in village extension; wide approach formed and metalled to Post-office; tracks leading to No. 1 and No. 2 mines cleared and repaired; necessary pipes, culverts, water-tables, &c.

In addition an engineering survey was made by the District Surveyor, and reports and estimates given for the installation of an efficient water-supply both for domestic use and fire purposes.

H. D. M. HASZARD,
Chief Surveyor.

CANTERBURY.

LANDS OFFERED FOR DISPOSAL.

Five new settlements under the Land for Settlements Act were offered during the year, particulars of which are given in the separate report under that Act. In the Township of Hinds, thirty-one sections were sold for cash at auction, the total upset being £155, and the amount realized £218 10s. In the Township of Mina South, Cheviot, twenty-two sections were likewise offered for cash at auction, but only two were disposed of, and those two at the upset, £35. In the Darfield Township twenty-eight reserves, aggregating 9 acres and 9 perches, were offered for lease by public tender, the whole being let at an aggregate rent of £6 4s. per annum. In the South Rakaia Township twenty-five sections, aggregating 6 acres 2 roods 31 perches, were leased at public auction, the upset of £7 7s. 6d. per annum being increased to an aggregate of £10 5s. per annum. An area of 9 acres and 17 perches, situated at Rabbit Island, was offered for tender at an upset of £4 11s., an annual rent of £5 8s. being realized.

The foregoing results show no great demand for small sections, but results were different when larger areas were offered. Five small grazing-runs in the Mackenzie country were offered for application. These formed parts of runs which fell in and were reoffered last year, an aggregate of 70,980 acres being offered at an annual rent of £1,310 7s. 4d. There was a ready demand, 141 persons being