

on the land is evidenced by the number of applicants at the recent ballots in Otago. The large number applying for land shows that farming is looked upon with a favourable eye, both by farmers' sons and townpeople. In perusing the lists of those who are keen to get land, it is very noticeable that applicants come from nearly every walk in life, and also that townpeople are about as anxious to get on the land as are those who have been brought up to a country life. The position of Otago farmers is sound, though they may not have made much solid progress during the year, and their prospects as long as the markets remain steady are very good.

LAND BOARD.

Last year I reported the steady increase of work, and this year it has continued to increase. In addition to the ordinary monthly two-day sittings, the Board has held sittings twice at Oamaru, once at Cromwell, and once at Tapanui. These sittings were in connection with land ballots, but though doubtless a great convenience and saving of time and expense to applicants, they were the reverse to the Board members, who found it difficult to arrange their own private business to suit.

DEPARTMENTAL.

Owing to the abolition of the Otago School Commissioners as an administrative body, and the administration of the education endowments having been taken over by the Land Board, the office-work has been considerably increased. New books on a new system had to be prepared both for this office and for Southland. To in part meet the extra clerical work, Mr. Macandrew, who has been for many years secretary to the School Commissioners, was joined to the staff here, and his knowledge of the past dealings with the endowments has been of much use to this office, and, I may say, to the Southland office also. The long illness of Mr. Johnston, Chief Clerk, necessarily increased the work of other officers, and I take this opportunity of acknowledging the cheerful and competent way in which all the officers have discharged their various duties.

E. H. WILMOT,
Commissioner of Crown Lands.

SOUTHLAND.

During the year the number of tenants has increased by 756. Total area held is 2,170,365 acres, as against 1,862,042 last year, the annual rent payable being £39,989 as compared with £26,434 last year. The gross revenue received was £56,664, being an increase of £18,766 over last year's receipts. The large increases in tenants and revenue are mainly owing to the taking-over of the late School Commissioners' leases, there being 722 such tenants, holding 318,745 acres, with an annual rent of £12,855.

THE VARIOUS TENURES.

Under the heading "Lands sold for Cash" the area purchased from the Crown shows a decrease of 918 acres, but the revenue received is £1,216 greater than last year. Under the occupation-with-right-of-purchase system the selections show a decrease of 5,900 acres as compared with previous year. The total number of holdings has been increased by seventeen, but the area held is 3,773 acres less than last year, owing to the freehold acquired exceeding the area selected. The increase in annual rent payable is £48. The freeholds acquired during the year show an increase of 6,748 acres over last year's purchases. Under the renewable-lease system the area selected during the year is 585 acres more than last year. The total number of holdings has been increased from 93 to 123, the area held from 8,969 acres to 12,599, and the annual rental payable from £360 to £518. Under the perpetual-lease tenure only seven tenants exercised their right to acquire the freehold, while sixteen tenants did likewise under the lease-in-perpetuity system. The remaining tenures are practically the same as last year.

ARREARS OF RENT.

It is pleasing to note that the arrears of rent are now practically reduced to a minimum. The total amount of arrears due at the 31st March, exclusive of the current instalments (including education endowments) is only £199. This gratifying result is largely due to the high prices ruling for stock and dairy produce.

FREEHOLD TITLES ISSUED.

The subjoined table shows the number of provisional titles issued by the Receiver of Land Revenue. Compared with last year the number of purchasers has increased by fifty-nine and the area acquired by 10,469 acres.

Tenure.				Number.	Area.		
					A.	R.	P.
Occupation with right of purchase	..	..	..	25	10,172	2	1
Lease in perpetuity purchased)	..	..	..	16	3,184	3	29
Perpetual lease (purchased	..	..	..	8	721	0	34
Cash	..	..	..	22	963	1	31
Auction	..	..	..	35	214	3	32
Totals	..	..	..	106	15,257	0	7