

SESSION II.
1912.
NEW ZEALAND.

RANGITAIKI LAND DRAINAGE:

REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH, 1912; TOGETHER WITH STATEMENT
OF ACCOUNTS.

*Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly pursuant to Section 10 of the Rangitaiki
Land Drainage Act, 1910.*

SIR,—

Department of Lands, Wellington, 1st June, 1912.

I have the honour to submit the report upon the drainage operations in the Rangitaiki Plains, pursuant to the provisions of section 10 of the Rangitaiki Land Drainage Act, 1910.

The total area affected by the Act is 87,100 acres, the greater part of which has been disposed of either in freehold or under leasehold tenures, or remains in the hands of the Maoris.

Operations were commenced at the beginning of 1911, when the necessary preliminary engineering surveys were made. The report of the Land Drainage Engineer (attached) shows what has been done since that date. The chief work is the diversion of the Rangitaiki River. A contract for the excavation of a canal from the Oherero Bend to the sea has been let to Messrs. Rich and Jeffreys, and they have now commenced work. The contract price was £11,123. Most of the remaining drainage-works are being undertaken by the staff of the Land Drainage Branch of the Department, under the direction of the Land Drainage Engineer (Mr. J. B. Thompson) and his assistant (Mr. O. N. Campbell). Very satisfactory progress is being made.

During the year it was necessary to effect the classification of the drainage-area in accordance with section 6 of the Act, and the requisite regulations were gazetted on the 16th March, 1911. Mr. H. Lundius, Crown Lands Ranger, Wanganui, was appointed as arbitrator for the Government; and at a public meeting held at Te Teko on the 19th April, 1911, Mr. Edward Allen, of Cambridge, was elected the arbitrator to act on behalf of the occupiers of land in the Rangitaiki Land Drainage District. The classification was made during May, and subsequently the Valuer-General revised the valuations of the various holdings, in order that the rates to cover payment of interest on the outlay and repayment of principal may be levied.

At the end of the year Mr. William C. Kensington, I.S.O., retired from the position of Under-Secretary of the Department, and relinquished his supervision of the drainage scheme, which was initiated under his personal direction and advice. I hope to be able to visit the locality and inspect the works at an early date.

The whole of the moneys raised under the Act for the drainage and reclamation of the plains will subsequently be repaid by the settlers by means of a special rate, the first instalment of which will probably be levied during the current year. Since the passing of the Act and the commencement of drainage operations the values of lands in the plains have greatly increased. Much of the leasehold land was originally let to tenants at rents based on a capital value of about 10s. per acre. Sales have lately been reported at prices of £14 and £16 per acre, showing the great reliance placed by purchasers on the ultimate success of the operations, and the consequent improvement of the lands.

The accompanying plan shows the works in progress and in contemplation. The statement of accounts shows the expenditure.

I have, &c.,

JOHN STRAUCHON, Under-Secretary.

Hon. Thomas Mackenzie, F.R.G.S., Minister of Lands.