

*Conversions of Leases in Perpetuity to Freeholds under Part II of the Land Laws Amendment Acts, 1912 and 1913.*

During the past year a large number of settlers took advantage of the passing of these Acts to acquire the freehold of their sections. The total number thus dealt with was 142, the area so purchased 14,230 acres, and the amount realized £25,023. A small proportion also chose the deferred-payment system as an easier method of ultimately purchasing their holdings. I anticipate, however, that the lengthening of the period of payment from ten to twenty years will make this system much more popular in future. There is still much ignorance of the provisions of the Acts regarding the conversion of leaseholds into freeholds, and as this is gradually dispelled no doubt the applications will greatly increase in number.

LAND BOARD MEETINGS.

Twelve ordinary meetings of the Land Board were held during the year. Special meetings were also held at Wanganui, Pahiatua, Masterton, and Levin in connection with ballots for land in those districts.

An election for a representative of the Crown tenants on the Board was held on the 5th June, 1913, and resulted in the return of Mr. H. T. Ellingham, the sitting member.

REBATES OF RENT.

Rebates for prompt payment of rent totalling £4,463 were granted as follows:—

	No.	Amount. £
Ordinary Crown lands	2,065	2,534
Lands-for-settlement land	372	1,749
National-endowment land	72	180

ARREARS OF RENT.

The gross arrears of rent show a considerable reduction as compared with last year's figures, the amount being £3,700, as against £9,133 the previous year.

OFFICE OF RECEIVER OF LAND REVENUE.

In this branch of the office 8,170 revenue receipts were issued during the year, and provisional titles prepared numbered 231, the total gross revenue thus represented being £161,625. These figures show a very considerable increase over last year's returns. In the Deposit Account, 1,102 receipts for the sum of £30,343, and 314 cheques showing 1,520 disbursements, were issued. £15,174 was paid into the Local Bodies' Deposit Account, and £7,078 was paid to twenty-six local bodies.

CLERICAL, ETC.

Approximately the number of letters received during the year was 17,752, and the number despatched 37,047. The latter figures comprise ordinary correspondence, rent-notices and receipts, sale-posters, circulars, plans, &c. There were 861 cheques, covering 721 vouchers drawn on Imprest Account for a sum of £8,124. Miscellaneous accounts dealt with covered 702 vouchers, and there were thirteen requisitions for imprest moneys made during the year, representing a total of £8,450. A Remington Wahl machine has been installed in the office, and various alterations of the forms formerly in use have also been made, all of which save much time and labour.

CHANGES IN THE CLERICAL STAFF.

It is with regret that I have to record the death of Mr. C. St. G. Gore, which took place in December last. The late Mr. Gore was an exceedingly popular and capable officer, and his sudden death while still in the prime of life was a great loss to the Department and to his fellow-officers.

I have again much pleasure in reporting to you how satisfied I am with the capability and efficiency of all the officers of the Clerical Division of my staff.

T. N. BRODRICK,  
Commissioner of Crown Lands.

NELSON.

The past year has witnessed steady progress in settlement, notwithstanding the drawback of a long-standing industrial stress, which in the spring developed into a strike, and for a while seriously dislocated inter-communication and spoilt the market for early produce.

ARREARS OF OLD SELECTIONS.

During the year an active effort has been made to complete by staff and contract surveys some rather old arrears of selections originally made on scheme survey. These were principally in the blocks of Brighton No. 1, Brighton No. 2, Matakiki West, and Mount Arthur, amounting to some 20,000 acres. The surveys of these, which are all but completed, will allow of titles being issued, rents being properly allocated, and business transactions generally being placed on a better footing, and, as roads advance, will improve the accessibility of the blocks, and allow improvements to be made more effectually.