

Section 19 authorizes the acquisition of the fee-simple of Crown land leased under Part VIII of the Land Act, 1908—*i.e.*, mining districts land occupation leases—and section 20 authorizes the acquisition of the fee-simple of land leased under the Westland and Karama Mining Districts Regulations. Another important section is No. 24, which authorizes agents to apply for land on behalf of members of Expeditionary Forces during the absence of such members from the Dominion.

Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act, 1915.—This Act was passed for the purpose of settling discharged soldiers on Crown and settlement lands. The lands may be set apart under the "ordinary tenures" of the Act, and disposed of under the provisions of the Land Act, 1908, or the Land for Settlements Act, 1908, or the land may be set apart under "special tenures" and allotted to discharged soldiers for cash, on the deferred-payment system, or on a lease with a purchasing clause. There is power to assist selectors under the "special tenures" financially, in order to enable them to bring the land into profitable occupation. Regulations under this Act have been prepared and gazetted.

Education Reserves Amendment Act, 1915.—A short Act providing for registration under the Land Transfer Act, 1915, of leases of education reserves not already under the provisions of the last-mentioned Act.

Kauri-gum Industry Amendment Act, 1915.—The most important section of this Act is No. 3, which provides for the setting-apart of lands within a kauri-gum district for the purpose of promoting the systematic recovery of kauri-gum and other valuable products contained therein.

Scenery Preservation Amendment Act, 1915.—A short Act which authorizes the Governor by Proclamation to remove the reservation over portions of scenic reserves deemed to be auriferous.

Swamp Drainage Act, 1915.—This Act authorizes the constitution of drainage areas in any part of the Dominion, and the undertaking of drainage, reclamation, &c., in order to render swamp land fit for settlement. Money for such works will be raised by the Minister of Finance, and will be repayable by a rate on the lands within any drainage area: such rate to be payable in proportion to the benefit the various lands received from the expenditure.

Reserves, &c., Disposal Act, 1915.—This Act, which authorizes special dealings with land, &c., contains 140 clauses, and is the largest Act of its kind yet placed on the statute-book.

LANDS OFFERED FOR SELECTION.

During the year an area of 653,313 acres of land was offered for selection under the various tenures provided by the Land Act, Land for Settlements Act, and Education Reserves Acts. In addition, the Crown also dealt with an area of 95,969 acres comprised in endowment areas, the administration of which is carried out by the Department acting under special statutory authority.

Under the optional system an area of 72,734 acres was advertised, the bulk of the land being in the North Island.

Under renewable lease an area of 142,355 acres was offered, 75,462 acres being land-for-settlement holdings with a right to acquire the freehold, and 66,893 acres national-endowment and ordinary Crown land. The pastoral-run area comprised 172,090 acres, and in the Otago District an area of 221,480 acres was offered under the small-grazing-run system.

In dealing with this large area the various Land Boards of the Dominion have kept in view the question of excluding from ballots men eligible for military service.

The demand for good land in accessible localities continues, and consequently there were numerous applications for the blocks situated in the more favourable localities. It may be pointed out, however, that 824,907 acres of land in various parts of the Dominion is lying open for selection in the "Crown Lands Guide," so that any applicant with a genuine desire to settle on the land may obtain a section.

LANDS TO BE OPENED.

It is estimated that a gross area of 968,887 acres will be made available for selection during the current year under the various tenures provided by statute. The following shows the land districts contributing to this total: Auckland, 87,000; Hawke's Bay, 101,605; Taranaki, 38,209; Wellington, 68,645; Nelson, 50,000; Marlborough, 4,700; Westland, 7,400; Canterbury, 196,000; Otago, 395,328; Southland, 20,000.

LAND SELECTED.

The total selections during the year covered an area of 914,824 acres by 1,926 selectors. The ordinary Crown lands holdings represented 457,534 acres, land for settlements 74,114, national endowment 361,884, and 21,292 acres educational reserves and other classes. Full particulars of these transactions under the various tenures are given in Table 3 published in the appendix.

FREEHOLDS ACQUIRED.

The freeholds acquired during the year under the powers conferred by the Land Laws Amendment Acts of 1912, 1913, and 1914 covered an area of 98,666 acres, in 424 holdings. This now brings the total to 302,973 acres, acquired by 1,546 selectors, the total price being £517,172.