

DEPARTMENT OF LANDS AND SURVEY.

LAND REVENUE.

The gross receipts for the past year amounted to £1,452,352, which shows a very substantial increase over last year's figures. This increase is due to the more extensive purchase and settlement of land.

LAND SETTLEMENT.

During the year 176,836 acres were acquired by the Land Purchase Board at a cost of £1,929,435 for the purposes of the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act, 1915, whilst 25,061 acres, costing £423,017, were purchased on behalf of individual soldiers under the provisions of section 3 of the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Amendment Act, 1917.

The Government is continuing the promotion of the closer settlement of the fertile lands of this Dominion, thereby providing a health-giving occupation in which our settlers continue to develop those enduring qualities which make for national greatness and ensure the future safety of the country. As the prosperity of New Zealand largely depends upon the production of its lands, increased production, stimulated by close settlement and cultivation, are essential, and every effort is being made to increase the number of holdings, as well as to educate and scientifically train those of our young men who have a bent towards agriculture or pastoral pursuits.

I would direct the attention of honourable members to a return included in the tables appended to this statement, which indicates that during the eight years ended the 31st March, 1920, there have been 23,021 subdivisions of land, affecting 4,858,340 acres.

Whilst reasonable precautions will be taken to prevent aggregation, the right to acquire small freeholds will not be withheld. The prospect of ownership is necessary to induce farmers to remain on the land, and is a direct incentive to production and economy.

DISCHARGED SOLDIERS SETTLEMENT ACCOUNT.

In regard to loans authorized and actually made, the following statement shows the extent of the financial operations on the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Account during the financial year:—

	Authorized.	Advances made.
Section 6, Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act, 1915:		
Advances on current account:—	£	£
1,945 returned soldiers	1,718,362	977,189
Section 2, Amendment Act, 1917: Advances towards purchase of farms, market-gardens, orchards, &c., and discharge of mortgages:—		
4,107 returned soldiers	6,754,846	4,893,822
Section 2, Amendment Act, 1917: Advances towards the purchase and erection of dwellings and discharge of mortgages:—		
6,363 returned soldiers	4,137,056	3,033,369
12,415 returned soldiers	£12,610,264	£8,904,380
Repayment of advances, &c.		134,600
Balance out on mortgage		<u>£8,769,780</u>

Under the provisions of section 6 of the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act, 1915, and its amendments, and section 3 of the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Loans Act, 1919, authority was provided to borrow up to £14,000,000; and it was anticipated that this would have given ample financial authority until Parliament met and decided to what extent the fund should be further committed.