

Land Board Work.—The work of the Land Board has shown little diminution during the year. A total of seventeen meetings (including the regular quarterly meetings at Gisborne) have been held, involving the consideration of 1,765 different items, being matters arising chiefly out of soldier settlement. Mr. L. McKay, whose term of office expired in May, was reappointed, and Mr. R. B. Ross, the Crown tenants' representative, was re-elected during the year by a substantial majority.

Revenue, &c.—The gross revenue for the year was £366,952, the largest ever realized for this district. Compared with the two preceding years the figures are as follows: Year ending 31st March—1919, £192,830; 1920, £243,089; 1921, £366,952. This large increase is due mainly to three factors—viz., the general prosperity of the district, notwithstanding some setbacks in the way of a dry season, and the resultant prosperity of the farming community, meaning prompt payment of rent by Crown tenants; the conversions to fee-simple (£55,128), a reflex of the foregoing; also the large revenue received under the heading of Discharged Soldiers Settlement Account. As regards rental arrears, the following comparison with the previous twelve months is favourable, having in view the large increase in the number of Crown tenants on the books in the period: As at 31st March, 1920—defaulting tenants, 90; amount owing, £5,001. As at 31st March, 1921—defaulting tenants, 57; amount owing, £5,091.

Lands for Future Selection.—During the coming year an area of 24,200 acres will be available for settlement in fifty-two holdings, as follows: The Hurakia Block, of 9,103 acres, in twelve holdings, five of which are for discharged soldiers and seven are preference allotments to Natives who were formerly interested in the land. The Wharekaka Settlement, of 778 acres, in fourteen allotments: first-class dairy land. The Hangaroa and Patutahi Blocks, of 7,487 acres, in seven allotments: education reserves, the leases of which have expired; fair to good grazing country. The Glencoe Settlement, of 477 acres, in eleven allotments: first-class dairying and small-farming land. The Hernutia Block, of 3,553 acres, in two allotments: third-class land. The Te Reinga Block, of 1,600 acres, in three allotments: fair bush block. The Paraeroa and Waihora Block, of about 1,200 acres, in three allotments: first-class grazing-country.

In addition to these the Hereheretau Block, of 6,444 acres, will be ready for leasing under special statutory terms to the Maori Soldiers' Fund Council Incorporated Trustees, Gisborne.

There will also be reoffered for selection, with preference as indicated in section 4 of the Land Laws Amendment Act, 1920, an area of 14,526 acres in Puketapu Survey District and Tuahu Survey District; also the Putere and Kahotea Blocks. These were lands previously opened purely for soldier settlement, but have failed to find applicants under that heading, and will, on the Board's recommendation, be made available for restricted civilian application (including discharged soldiers) in terms of the Act. These are third-class lands.

A large block of bush country, containing 18,600 acres, near the Motu, has been subdivided into seven sections, but immediate settlement cannot take place until certain roading is effected, and estimates of the cost of this are now in preparation.

There are still about 8,000 acres of the northern part of the Purahotangihia Block to be disposed of, but this, being pumice country, will be held back pending railway facilities.

Of Native lands, the Crown holds interests amounting to 26,000 acres on the east coast. The settlement of these lands has been kept back by the difficulty of dealing with scattered areas having little or no access, but a scheme for consolidation of the Crown's interests is now under consideration, and should remove most of the trouble. In the Hawke's Bay portion of the district the same difficulty exists in a less exaggerated form, and interests owned by the Crown are not large, and are mostly subject to existing leases to Europeans, who have certain rights under the Native Land Act Amendment, 1913.

TARANAKI.

(H. J. LOWE, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

Conditions and Progress of Settlement.—The past year has been a momentous one, if for nothing else than to show how a seemingly safe position can, without any fault of this Department, or want of farming knowledge on his part, react on a settler. In the early part of the financial year 1920-21 prospects looked well, and the price of butterfat had risen to a height previously undreamed of: this undoubtedly—in this district at any rate—tended towards an increase of the price of land not warranted if a relapse occurred. The latter sudden collapse of wool, meat, hides, &c., meant a fall in the grazing section of the province that will require some hard tiding over; but so far as the State is concerned, we are trying in every legitimate way to meet the situation as regards our selectors. The producing-capacity of the district varies from one extreme to the other, but taken as a whole the average is well above normal; land on the Waimate Plains in particular has for many years steadily increased in value, and the returns have justified many of the prices quoted as obtained; but at these higher rates more intensive cultivation must be resorted to if selectors wish to obtain results commensurate with the outlay. Another fact that strikes one when first inspecting the district is the dissimilarity frequently encountered in properties only separated by a road or small stream: it is soon apparent that a certain locality cannot be generally assessed at an average acreage rate because you have thoroughly investigated one section in such area and on general appearance the other possessed the same characteristics. Each one must be taken on its merits, although in the south-western portion this is not noticeable to so marked an extent. To assess land, however, this last year has been beyond the powers of the keenest judges, and many reputed shrewd farmers, so far as productivity and management of their farms are concerned, have quitted these at prices extremely tempting, only to see them passed on at increased rates. While not, in numerous cases, considering