

257,924 acres, subdivided into 416 holdings, and comprising mostly scattered Crown, settlement, and national-endowment sections, were offered for selection; whilst, excluding miscellaneous leases, some 380,000 acres of Crown, settlement, and national-endowment lands and reserves, subdivided into 963 sections, were taken up during the same period, the miscellaneous leases covering 101,000 acres in 463 holdings.

The area available for settlement is 508,403 acres, and 401,742 acres are under survey at the present time. Preparations are also being made for the surveys of a total additional area of 485,598 acres.

SWAMP DRAINAGE RECLAMATION.

Engineering surveys and investigations of various swamp areas in Westland have been completed for the information of settlers. These, though not extensive in area, are promising propositions.

Construction works have been undertaken on an area of Crown land at Harihari, Westland, and the proclamation of further districts under the Swamp Drainage Act are awaiting the consent of the owners of the various alienated areas.

Operations at the major works at Kaitaia, Hikurangi, Hauraki Plains, Rangitai Plains, and Waihi are being vigorously pushed on.

DISCHARGED SOLDIERS SETTLEMENT ACCOUNT.

The following statement shows the extent of the financial operations in regard to loans authorized and advances made under the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act, 1915, and amendments, up to the end of the financial year:—

	Authorized. £	Advances made. £
Section 6, Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act, 1915: Advances on current account:—		
4,732 returned soldiers	4,237,159	4,168,236
Section 2, Discharged Soldiers Settlement Amendment Act, 1917: Advances towards purchase of farms, market gardens, orchards, and discharge of mortgages:—		
5,489 returned soldiers	8,860,082	8,843,192
Section 2, Discharged Soldiers Settlement Amendment Act, 1917: Advances towards purchase and erection of dwellings and dis- charge of mortgages thereon:—		
11,363 returned soldiers	8,180,980	7,959,275
<hr/> 21,584 returned soldiers	<hr/> £21,278,221	<hr/> 20,970,703
	£	
Repayments of principal	2,173,113	
Transfers to Realization and other accounts—Securi- ties in course of realization	173,436	
Transfers to Property Account—Securities bought in by Department on default of mortgagors ..	523,783	
		<hr/> 2,870,332
Balance on mortgage..	<hr/> £18,100,371

The gross receipts for the year amounted to £1,431,353. Of this sum £716,667 represents repayments of advances, while receipts in respect of interest and sundries total £714,686.

Although prices obtained for primary products improved considerably the proceeds were insufficient to enable all soldiers to fully overtake the arrears that had accumulated during the period of low prices.

In order to afford relief, postponements of instalments were granted where the circumstances appeared to warrant such. At the end of the year the amount outstanding on the Postponement Account was £67,165. Arrears in respect of interest and principal payments amounted to £541,125. A substantial reduction has been made in the arrears carried forward from previous years, due principally to the improved prices of butter, wool, lamb, &c. Further reductions might have