

1927.
NEW ZEALAND.

LAND FOR SETTLEMENTS ACT, 1925

(REPORT ON THE).

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly pursuant to Section 109 of the Land for Settlements Act, 1925.

The LAND PURCHASE CONTROLLER to the Hon. the MINISTER OF LANDS.

SIR,—

Department of Lands and Survey, Wellington, 21st July, 1927.

I have the honour to submit a report on land-purchase operations for the year ended 31st March, 1927.

Some fifty-one properties were considered during the year; but the only purchases of any moment that were effected were those of the Tangowahine Estate in the Dargaville district, and the Te Wera Estate in the Motu district. These two estates accounted for some 12,780 acres out of a total area of 13,152 acres purchased. The Crown has so far taken title to some 2,858 acres of the Tangowahine Estate, possession of the remaining 1,500 acres having not yet been taken. This latter area, therefore, is not included in the returns of land purchased for the year.

The Te Wera Estate was subdivided into eleven holdings, ranging in area from 510 to 1,300 acres; but no applications were received when the sections were offered for ballot in February last. Steps have now been taken to stock the property, and it will be farmed by the Crown until such time as it is deemed advisable to again offer it for selection.

The Tangowahine Settlement will be offered as soon as possible, it being expected that the Crown will obtain possession of the whole area at an early date. Works are now in progress, and it is anticipated that the railway-line from Auckland to Dargaville will traverse the settlement.

Clifton Settlement at date of writing has all been disposed of, and a satisfactory clearing sale held of the Crown stock, &c. Seven sections in this settlement were offered for ballot in January, but the demand was disappointing. The subdivisions were then recast, and additional areas added to some of the settlers' holdings, while three farms were offered for sale by public auction. These farms met with a ready demand, and were all purchased on deferred payments at prices in excess of the upsets. The settlement is now generally in good heart, and the prospects of settlers are very favourable.

Although it cannot yet be said that land-values generally are on a thoroughly satisfactory basis, indications are not wanting that a more reasonable view is being taken by private owners of the value of their estates. The action taken by the Crown in the revaluation of properties held by discharged soldiers has undoubtedly had a good effect, but a wider realization is yet needed on the part of many owners and mortgagees of the necessity of writing down land and mortgage values in conformity with the productive capacity of the land. The prices asked for properties offered to the Crown during the year were in many cases too high to permit of favourable consideration, while some properties quite unsuitable for subdivision were placed under offer. Successful subdivision presents many difficulties under prevailing conditions, and can only be accomplished when suitable land can be acquired at prices that will permit of a fair return on the capital outlay plus the additional charges that are inseparable from the cutting-up of estates. There are, however, a fair number of estates in the Dominion that possess attractive qualities from a cutting-up point of view, and the Land Purchase Board is always willing to give the most careful consideration to the purchase of suitable properties.