

*Item—Kirk's Bush: Fencing and Draining, £225.*

962. This item should be reduced to £75.

Saving, £150.

*Item—Kumutoto Scenic Reserve: Fencing, £500.*

„ *Mangamaunu Scenic Reserve: Half Cost of Boundary-fence, £210.*

963. **We are of opinion that works of this description should be postponed until financial conditions improve.** We recommend the deletion of the items.

Saving, £710.

*Item—Ross Borough Endowment Exchange, £231.*

„ *Ruaapekapeka Pa Improvements, £63.*

„ *Subsidy, Scenic Reserve, Bream Head, £76.*

964. The above items are non-recurrent, and represent a reduction on 1932–33 appropriations.

Saving, £370.

*Item—Summit Road Scenic Reserves Ranger, £270.*

965. This item represents the salary of the ranger employed by the Summit Road Scenic Reserves Board. We consider that this reserve is of purely local interest, and **the State should not be called upon to meet a heavy annual charge of this description.** The remuneration should be paid by the local community, and we recommend the deletion of this item.

Saving, £270.

*Item—Survey Costs, Lake Okaitaina Reserves, £1,061.*

966. Expenditure of this description should be postponed until financial conditions improve.

Saving, £1,061.

#### *General.*

967. We wish to remark in connection with this subdivision that in our opinion assistance towards scenic reserves which are of no particular interest to the general community should not be given out of the Consolidated Fund.

968. A perusal of the appropriations in the past will indicate that there has been the tendency to expect the Government to contribute towards projects which have only a limited local interest. It should be accepted as a general rule that the State will only assist in cases where it is in the national interest to do so.

969. If scenic reserves or recreation-grounds are required they should be financed wholly by the local communities, and if a greater spirit of self-help were evinced there would, in many ways, be considerable savings to the Consolidated Fund.

#### CONCLUSION.

970. We have dealt at considerable length with the operations of this Department, and have advocated reorganization in several directions, but it is not possible to summarize the savings which can be effected by many of our recommendations. In the aggregate, however, they will be large and of more than temporary benefit to the finances of the Dominion. We refer particularly to the recommendation that a central Board be established in Wellington. **We look upon it as of extreme importance that this Board should have most of the powers now vested in the Minister of Lands. It is surely inconsistent that the investment of public money in mortgages, in the purchase of land, and in other directions, should be subject to control by Investment Boards and the like, while the valuable estate of the Crown represented by land should be so much under individual control.** It is particularly desirable, in view of present financial conditions, that some independent control should be exercised, for there is no doubt but that the pressure on the Crown to reduce permanently rents and capital values will be hard to resist. **Permanent reductions in sympathy with present prices would be an unwarranted dissipation of the national estate.**

971. We should also again refer briefly to the position in regard to the drainage accounts. The experience of the Department, which is merely a parallel of the experience of the Public Works Department in carrying out similar schemes, is so unfortunate that on no account should any major schemes be attempted in the future out of borrowed money.

972. With regard to the Land for Settlements Account, it has been shown that it is impossible as the law now stands for the Crown to acquire land and subdivide it for settlement without ultimate loss to the taxpayer. **The law should certainly be amended to provide for an increased rental return. If this is not done, there must be in the very near future still further charges on taxation in respect of land-settlement.**