

REPORT OF THE REGISTRAR-GENERAL OF LAND.

Mr. MOORHOUSE to the Hon. W. GISBORNE.

Office of Registrar-General of Land, Wellington,
12th July, 1872.

SIR,—

I have the honor to state, in tabulated form, for your information, particulars of the business transacted in the Land Transfer Department during the past financial year.

The total vote for the year's expenditure was £8,614 15s. The total actual expenditure for the same period, including the cost of very extensive advertisements, has, by the exercise of a vigilant economy, been kept within the vote by about £500. The business done shows a return, in cash, of £4,539 17s. 11d. Credit, under the new Regulations, which came into operation on the 1st January, 1872, has been given for £266 10s., which two sums taken together amount to £4,806 7s. 11d., or £193 12s. 1d. below the estimate of revenue I had the honor to submit in my report of last year, and this, notwithstanding that regulations were, with the Governor's sanction, promulgated in January, which materially reduced the fees payable for registration.

During the year the Assurance Fund has been increased by £1,500 14s. 7d.; and credit has been given for a further sum of £152 17s.

Before proceeding with any further observations, I must perform the gratifying duty of expressing my very high opinion of the zeal which has been evinced by the District Land Registrars, Examiners, and other officers of the department, to whose exertions is to be attributed, in the first degree, the signal success which has attended the early working of this very useful institution.

This day will be published a "Handy Book," explanatory of the principles and uses of the system. In editing this work I have to confess the great obligation which is owing to Mr. Torrens, whose "Handy Book" I have adopted as the basis of a portion of the work. This little book contains a copious index to the Acts, with forms and explanatory remarks. Mr. Joshua Strange Williams, of Lincoln's Inn, District Land Registrar at Christchurch, was mainly concerned in the preparation of the "Handy Book;" and the Index was principally supplied by Mr. D'Arcy Haggitt, a member of the legal profession. For the learning and zeal evinced by the former gentleman, and other able lawyers in this department, and for the co-operation of members of the legal profession practising at the Bar, I ask your leave to express my thanks.

I may be permitted to offer my congratulations to the Government on the success which has attended their bold determination to diffuse, to the utmost extent, the advantages expected to flow from the operation of the Acts, by establishing ten district offices, notwithstanding there was no precedent to be found in the Australian Colonies for such a course. Experience quite justifies the original calculation, that the extraordinary expense attendant upon creating so many centres of operation would be a financial success, considered apart from the very substantial advantage which the public derives by such a facility for dealing with property being brought as it were to their very doors. A comparison of the rate of progress in New Zealand with that of kindred institutions in the other Australian Colonies, is remarkably in favour of New Zealand, and, in my humble opinion, may be referred to the fact that in each of the other colonies there exists only one central office.

Upon a full examination of such indications as I can gather, I estimate the receipts of next year at £8,500; and in consequence of this exceptionally material increase, I advise that you ask the Legislature for a small increase on the amount voted last year, because it is of the last importance that no arrears whatever should exist as a justification of the adverse comments of any unfriendly element in the community.

During the past year I experienced considerable anxiety in consequence of rumors respecting the arrears of business in particular districts, but personal inspection immediately satisfied me that in no case complained of was any fault or negligence to be justly charged against the officers of the department; but generally, the delay which had been the subject of current gossip, was to be accounted for by the presence of a very natural difficulty, not the creation of the Land Transfer Department.

I have felt it my duty to ask the Government to make some slight additions to the salaries of several of the professional gentlemen who gave their zealous services at very low salaries, on the distinct understanding that, upon proof of their energy in popularizing the system, and the consequent increase of business, Government would recognize their zeal by paying a salary more adequate to the service rendered, and more fully admitting their special professional claim.