

transaction. This difficulty is often surmounted by the payments being, as a fact, received in the Commissioner's office, and then handed over in one sum to the Receiver. We can see no reason why such accumulated funds should not be paid by the Commissioner directly into the bank. A system which leads in practice to this evasion of the strict letter of the law cannot, we submit, be a good one, and, as it certainly increases the total amount of work to be done, we believe some saving would be effected by discontinuing it.

We have taken some evidence on the question as to whether it is necessary to continue to issue Crown grants as well as certificates of title under the Land Transfer Act. Several witnesses to whose opinions we attach much weight say no real advantage is gained by having two documents. This, however, being rather a question for the Law Officers of the Crown than for us to decide, we simply allude to it as a matter worth careful consideration.

SURVEY DEPARTMENT.

This has always been a very costly branch of the Government service, involving a total estimated expenditure for last year of £150,000. Having been regarded from a scientific and technical rather than a practical point of view, its management has, to a large extent, been left almost uncontrolled in the hands of specialists. We regret to have to state that we have formed a low opinion of the real utility of a large proportion of the work done.

In whatever direction we have inquired we have found evidence of serious waste of money in making sectional surveys of land which is of such a character as to preclude the idea of its being required for settlement in the sizes of holdings into which it is arbitrarily cut up. The extent to which this has been done is almost incredible, except to those who know from experience how it is possible for a department to act on a theoretical system without considering the practical conditions involved. Examination of maps, in connection with evidence taken, has convinced us that a large waste of public money has been incurred in this direction.

Blocks have been uselessly cut up into numbers of small sections. This has been proved by the fact that either no sales have been effected, or they have been so small as not even to cover the cost of survey, which has in a large number of cases been from 1s. 6d. to 2s. 6d. per acre. The evil has not, however, been confined to the mere waste of money. The result of laying off sections without regard to the nature and configuration of the land has been that large blocks of country are rendered unsaleable, and are often held without charge by the men who have been shrewd enough to secure the few which form, as it were, the key to the rest. This has tended to encourage that monopoly which it has been the desire of the Legislature to avoid, while it has largely increased the expense of survey.

To those who have any knowledge of the practical work of settlement it will be at once obvious that where land is laid out in such a way that the section lines run over ground on which it is almost impossible to fence, the prospect of purchases being made is greatly decreased. In a large number of cases the scheme of sections has been first laid off on paper quite independent of the form of the land; and the result may be imagined when this has to be marked out on a rugged piece of country. Had care been taken to survey land only into suitable allotments, and with due consideration of the way in which from its character it was likely to be occupied, the mere saving in money to the country would have been large, while profitable settlement would have been greatly assisted.

If all we had to say on this subject were merely to point out the irreparable errors of the past, our task would be one of no practical utility; but it is not so. The same system is still being carried on in various parts of the colony, and a worse than useless expenditure is being incurred. We would strongly recommend that reliable reports should be at once obtained as to the character of the land in the various land districts which is now being cut up into sections, and that all the surveys which are shown to be of the character we describe should be discontinued.

No further detailed surveys should be undertaken much in advance of the requirements of purchasers, and, subject to definite regulations, of a character to guard the interests of the public against speculators, applications to purchase