

most tedious matter both to the surveyor and the department. The survey of the actual piece of land to be dealt with is in each case but a small part of the work. The survey of surrounding lands becomes necessary to unravel the tangle of uncertainty, and ascertain the relative and actual position of properties. The expense and delays consequent on such investigations make the department appear obstructive to the parties interested; but the duty of check must be thoroughly done, it cannot be slurred over, for the Government guarantee every title under the Land Transfer Act; and it is only a question of time until the whole landed property of the country will have come under this system. Moreover, land is being subdivided and re-subdivided; public bodies, in the matter of taking land for roads, waterworks, &c., are in constant communication with the Land Transfer Department: so that it will be manifest, unless these multifarious transactions are under the control of a clear and definite system, very great confusion will ultimately ensue.

A set of regulations was issued two years ago for the guidance of surveyors furnishing plans under the Land Transfer Act, and the department has established standard points in most of the principal towns and suburbs to which surveys can be referred. In the country the trig. points serve the same purpose. With these precautions, and careful examination of plans, and, when necessary, actual inspection by the department on the ground, the system can continue to be worked without undue risk to the public interest.

PUBLICATION OF MAPS.

In addition to the ordinary sale-maps of settlement survey, the preparation and issue of the survey districts to the scale of an inch to the mile is being pushed on as the survey of each district gets completed. Each of these maps usually represents 100,000 acres—a square of $12\frac{1}{2}$ miles side—and brings together in a handy form the relative positions of roads, railways, and surveyed sections. The maps are either reduced by photography and reproduced to scale, or drawn on stone, so that adjacent maps join together as may be required. The publication of the inch-scale is a great convenience to the public and a saving of expense to Government; for, once a district is published on this scale, there is no further need for tracings from the original plans.

This branch of the department, which is more immediately under the direction of Mr. Barron, has sustained a great loss in the death of Mr. McColl, the chief photographer, in April last. Mr. McColl's skill and thorough acquaintance with every detail relating to the reproduction of maps, and his ever-ready disposition to serve, made him a most invaluable officer. Mr. Ramsay, the assistant photographer, has, unaided, kept up the work very well. With a little assistance and growing experience, he will prove equal to all the practical requirements of the Government. The amalgamation of the Public Works and Surveys Photolithographic Branches has resulted in a saving of about £700 a year, and the work of neither department has fallen in arrear.

DEPARTMENTAL.

On account of the great mass of arrear-work which the department has been bringing up for the last three and a half years, there has been a much larger staff at work than what was requisite for ordinary current requirements. As arrears are now getting worked off, less assistance will be needed, and there will consequently be a diminished expenditure for the current year.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. William Rolleston,
Minister of Lands.

JAMES MCKERROW,
Surveyor-General.