

ment surveys let by contracts in various parts of the district; these, with one exception, where the Chief Surveyor, Mr. Marchant, terminated the contract and relet the work, showed that fairly good work is obtained by contract at a moderate cost, and is a great help where a sudden demand arises either to put persons in possession of land purchased on the free-selection system, or to get blocks ready for sale after survey. Five inspections have been made of private surveys sent in under the Land Transfer system; these were undertaken in cases where a doubt had arisen as to the correctness of the work, or where it differed from work already sent in and passed. In cases where the inspections disclosed careless or bad work, the surveyor has been warned that similar work will render it necessary for me to disclose the fact to the Surveyor-General with a view of getting his authorisation cancelled. It may be necessary for me to add that the cost of inspections has been greatly increased from the fact that, prior to Mr. Smith taking up the duties, the work had unavoidably got into arrears, and the surveyors had, in many instances, left the ground. Some of these inspections were exceptionally large, involving several months' work—notably that of the Awarua Native Block, containing over a quarter of a million acres. I am taking steps, however, to prevent a recurrence of this, as all inspections are now well up to date.

*Office-work.*—During the year 42 road plans, 49 Native plans, 49 sectional plans, 2 trigonometrical plans, 2 township plans, and 10 miscellaneous plans were examined, reduced, and recorded on the various record-maps. Three hundred and two Crown grants were issued, and eight plans of new lands offered for sale were prepared for photo-lithography.

*Native Land Court Branch.*—Thirty-five plans, to save the expense of survey, were compiled; 454 subdivisions or orders of the Native Land Court were recorded on the standard record-maps of the department, representing an area of 397,865 acres; 807 plans were placed on Native certificate of title forms, and 27 plans placed on deeds for the Land Purchase Department. Of miscellaneous dealings, 120 applications for survey upon leasing were received, 198 nominations for survey were acted upon, 27 lien vouchers passed, and 3,273 notices to the Natives requiring survey sent.

*Land Transfer Branch.*—There were 104 working-plans examined and passed, 12 standard-sheets of towns constructed, 1,830 plans placed on certificates of title, and the following miscellaneous documents attended to and passed: 78 applications, 658 transfers, 5 proclamations, 4 mortgages, and 31 leases.

*General.*—New county and 40-chain district maps are urgently wanted, particularly the latter, with a view to some headway being made with publications which are grievously in arrears, but it is impossible to do this with the present staff, who are barely sufficient for ordinary current duties. More office accommodation is also required, the present rooms being overcrowded and in other respects inconvenient. In the clerical branch the letters received and despatched numbered 14,876; vouchers passed, 744; notices despatched, 2,500; applications registered, licenses and leases prepared, 669; warrants, comprising 341 titles and copies, 138; lithographs, posters, Crown Lands Guides despatched, 836; circulars to surveyors, 204.

*Proposed Operations for next Season.*—I have not yet had time to fully mature plans for the more urgent work which will have to be done during the present year. The boundary pegs of the greater part of the selections made in the blocks opened for selection during the past and previous years have either been put in or surveys for that purpose are now in progress, and I shall have no difficulty in overtaking any arrears there is still to do. A considerable quantity of back-boundary lines have, however, still to be cut and pegged of surveys undertaken in the past where from the urgency of getting the land into the market this has been left undone. The Government is sooner or later forced to do this work, and the cost of doing it is greatly increased by having to send a surveyor on to the ground again; the trig. points have to be reflagged, starting-points re-established, and check-bearings re-observed. I propose, therefore, subject to your approval, to first get the arrears of this work completed, and in new surveys to get such back-lines cut at once as are necessary to put in each corner peg, so that the survey shall be finally completed and done with when the surveyor makes the first survey. A great need, however, also exists for completing the road surveys left undone when the early surveys of this part of the colony were made. Very great injustice will be done to existing settlers, and the future settlement of the country will be greatly interfered with, if these roads are not laid out before the right to take them has lapsed; in many cases it has already done so, and roads are thereby forced into routes which would never have been chosen if the right to take the proper line had been exercised, as they should have been. If this work is not done I predict it will eventually cost the country many thousands of pounds to rectify the omission to do so. Roads which have been in existence as coach-roads for a quarter of a century have never been located on the plans, and a correct plan of the district showing the internal lines of communication cannot be made. I am having rough maps made of each county, showing on them every road laid out when the original survey was made, or that has been legalised since. These I propose sending to the local bodies, asking them to allow their local engineer or overseers to sketch thereon every road that is in use that is not shown, and also to indicate any road that should be taken where the right to do so has not expired; and I trust I can, by simplifying the system of survey adopted, and the unnecessary pegging and calculations which have hitherto been done, to so reduce the work that in two years I shall be able to report that this most necessary work has been completed so far as the present requirements go. I trust, also, in due course to submit for your consideration suggestions in connection with original survey and subdivisional surveys of Native lands, which will in future provide for the taking of the principal roads required at the time the surveys are made.

Whilst, however, providing for the most pressing of the necessary road and other surveys required, I propose to get a very considerable area of Crown lands open for sale, by placing staff or contract surveyors on new blocks of land, first getting the main roads graded and contracts out for forming such portions of them as funds can be provided for, then allowing the surveyor to go on with the sectional work, so that by the time the survey is done the main roads will be ready to be opened, and intending settlers will be able to see the land and the boundaries of their selections, and