

In village settlements twenty-one inspections were made, with not such good results as the foregoing, as eighteen were deficient. This must not be taken as a sample of village settlements as a whole, for the inspection that has taken place was aimed at the defaulters, most of the remaining ones having passed the final inspection previously.

The inspection of sixteen small grazing-runs shows £3,438 as the value of improvements carried out, as against £874 required—about quadruple.

It is estimated that Crown tenants in the forest districts have felled 6,000 acres during the year. A much larger area would have been thus operated upon had it not been for the two preceding bad seasons for burning, which resulted in thousands of acres of felled bush being badly burnt or not burnt at all, a large part of which had to be scrubbed again before a burn could be hoped for.

I had expected to have been enabled by personal inspection of the numerous holdings of Crown tenants in this district to give a full detailed report on similar lines to the one on village and special settlements submitted in November last; but, though many have been visited by me, even as distant as the Motu, unfortunately, from various causes, I have been prevented from carrying out my intention in its entirety.

The total area of Crown lands not dealt with in any form is 436,072 acres, with an estimated value of £177,407.

Land open for selection on the 31st March last amounted to 41,793 acres, priced at £24,316. It is anticipated that the greater part of this will be selected during the current year, though it is possible that the 11,870 acres at Weber, surveyed a few years ago into sections averaging a thousand acres, will have to be cut up into smaller areas, as applications are now being made to have the sizes reduced; although the reports on the country hardly warrant it. Still, if persons will select it in reduced areas I think the opportunity should be offered them.

The 8,961 acres in Waiau District is not going off—due, no doubt, in a large measure, to the lack of proper road-accommodation. The Wairoa County Council is now expending £2,750 in forming a dray-road part of the distance, and it would be a great benefit to these lands if a small sum were voted to aid the Council in continuing the road beyond what the present loan will make.

Lands not yet thrown open for selection or dealt with in any manner amount to 394,279 acres, with an estimated value of £153,091. It is a matter for regret that out of this extensive area so little is suitable for small holdings of a hundred acres and under. There is no extent of level country; small flats, of a few hundred acres at the outside, being few and far-between. The greater part will make excellent grazing country; but, generally, it is not of a class that can be profitably occupied by persons of very limited means.

There are thousands of acres of good country that would bear a large population lying unproductive in the hands of the Natives.

A considerable extent is leased to Europeans in large blocks, which, one would judge by its being allowed to remain covered with forest, is in many instances held for speculation.

Referring to the compact block of 81,019 acres in the Hikurangi and Mangawaru Survey Districts, it will be a year or two, I think, before there is any demand for the back part, as it is very rough forest country, practically isolated, and likely to continue so for some time, for want of roads, the making of which will be delayed through the heavy outlay required in constructing them. The front portion is likely to be occupied soon, if road-works are continued up the Mata Valley.

Passing over the small scattered blocks in Mata, Urutawa, and Tutamoe South Districts, we come to the Motu and Waikohu-Matawai Blocks, 77,025 acres, about half of which is now in course of survey, and will be ready to be thrown open in a few months' time. The first mentioned is heavy forest country, the latter about half scrub and fern. Taken as a whole, although in parts rough, it will, when cleared, be a fine grazing district.

The next large area lies to the eastward of the Waikaremoana Lake, 32,429 acres. It was intended to have surveyed some of this during the past season, but other pressing work arose, and it was considered no harm would come by delaying it, as the existing means of communication from Wairoa was evidently preventing the disposal of another block open for selection in the vicinity.

At Hangaroa there is a block of 42,865 acres of somewhat rough character, which the Land Board has decided to offer in small grazing-runs and smaller sections on the alternative system, if any land is found to be suitable. The survey of this is now proceeding.

The 14,200 acres in the Nuhaka District is rough forest pastoral country. Some will probably be disposed of in from 1,000- to 2,000-acre blocks, but the back part will probably be found only fit to be worked in larger areas. A surveyor is now at work on this.

There is a block of 16,684 acres in the Mangahopai and Waitara District—rather poor land, with very bad access. A year or two ago it was offered in two pastoral runs, but no bid was made for them. At the last meeting of the Land Board it was decided to re-offer them by auction, an application having been made for one of them.

At Pohui there are a number of scattered pieces of Crown land, the largest, 5,000 acres, being now sectionised preparatory to its being thrown open for selection, which will be done shortly.

The 23,000 acres in the Kaweka District is a poor bit of country, forming the steep slopes of the range of that name. The higher parts are covered with snow several months of the year. It may be taken up later on, under a pastoral license at a low rental, for summer pasture, as the southern part has been dealt with in that manner.

There are still 8,840 acres left at Ngaruroro and Whakarara—rough country on the slopes of the northern end of the Ruahine Range. It will make fair pastoral country, but is not likely to be sought after at present.

The remaining blocks south of the foregoing are in the Norsewood and Woodville Survey Districts—6,600 acres and 6,400 acres respectively. Of the former, 2,800 acres is now being surveyed for the Liberal Special Settlement Association, and a little over a thousand acres more may be found suitable for settlement in one or two sections. The balance is the steep rugged side of the Ruahine Range.