

That the various improvements are now brought much closer up to date is shown by a comparison of this year's returns with those of 1893-94 (See table, Summary of Improvements effected on Selections during the Twelve Months.)

In that year the total area reported on taken up under "The Land Act, 1885," was 225,675 acres, and the deficient cultivated area was 3,203 acres, and the arrears of other improvements amounted to £7,672. The area inspected, held under the same Act this year, was about one-half the amount reported on the year before—namely, 100,424 acres; but the deficient cultivated area only amounted to 737 acres, and of other improvements only £1,270, whilst the deficient improvements on land purchased under "The Land Act, 1892," which amounted to £600 on 14,350 acres in 1893-94, is only returned as £660 on 64,138 acres of land taken up under the same Act, reported on during the year.

I think I may therefore, without egotism, claim, though my rule has been unfairly characterized as an unduly strict one, I have tried with even-handed justice to have the land-laws, which I have been appointed to administer in this district, faithfully carried out both by the large as well as by the small holder of land. To do so, however, without making enemies, falls, I am afraid, not to the lot of man.

In the clerical branch, the work has continued to largely increase, owing to the large amount of correspondence, &c., in connection with the settlement of members of farm-homestead associations and other selectors on their holdings; reports on applications for loans under the Government Advances to Settlers Act; inquiries as to the eligibility or otherwise of applicants for sections under the improved-farm conditions; the preparation of schedules of areas and calculation of capital values, rentals, payments under the Government Loans to Local Bodies Act, &c., of the various associations and other lands loaded for roads; the collection of rentals, &c.; conversions from one system to another; capitalisation; extensions to fourteen years; the various annual and other returns, &c.

The selectors on settlement conditions now registered on the books number 2,676, and the work of seeing that they comply with the various conditions of the Act is very great, especially as there are twelve different tenures under which land has been selected, and in the case of the village homestead-lease-in-perpetuity, several of the village settlements have their own special conditions, which renders them more difficult to work, and requires constant care and supervision in seeing that their respective conditions are carried out. The entering of Rangers' reports, issuing of notices to selectors in arrear with their improvements, &c., and the examination of applications for freehold titles, transfers, conversions from one system to another, &c., which have been very numerous, have more than taken up the time of the clerk who looks after these duties, and he has frequently had extra assistance to enable him to keep the work up to date, and to draft the necessary replies to be sent to the selectors. There were 757 Rangers' reports received during the year, and these had to be carefully checked, recorded, and analysed, to see whether the selector was in arrear or otherwise with his improvements, and that the conditions of the particular purpose for which they were made had been complied with. All defaulters had to be entered in schedules for the Land Board to deal with, and the necessary notices were sent out, and followed up from time to time, to insure prompt steps being taken by the selectors to comply with the conditions of the Act. This requires very careful supervision, and reference to records to see that the necessary action is taken at the right time. That this has been carried out in a very satisfactory manner, is proved by the fact that the defaulters reported at the end of the year are only ninety-one, as against 260 last year.

Owing to the decision to fix the 1st of January, 1895, as the date from which the payments and conditions of the farm-homestead selections were to commence, the ordinary work of the office from the latter part of February to the middle of March, was much impeded, and blocked by the issue of leases and the notices of payments to the members. During that time 4,521 leases and notices were issued to 727 selectors, and as 2,238 of these had been sent out previous to the alteration of the date of payment, and entered in the register, &c., it was necessary to make the required amendments at the time the notices left the office. The result has been that only 145 leases are outstanding at the present time.

The work in connection with the Land Board has continued to increase very much; in several sittings recently, over 140 applications for land, titles, transfers, and general subjects had to be considered and dealt with, often necessitating the extension of the meeting to the following day.

The outward and inward correspondence, including reports of Rangers, surveyors, and notices re payments from selectors, &c., aggregated over 36,000 letters, &c., or an average of about 100 per day. This is an increase over last year of 9,000. There were 228 records received from other departments and dealt with, 1,170 vouchers were passed through for payment, representing a sum of £27,795; 967 cheques for wages, &c., amounting to £6,421, were drawn on my imprest account.

The field-staff consisted of twenty-one parties and one Inspector, besides contract and Native Land Court surveyors.

The office work during the year has been exceptionally heavy, owing in a great measure to the various changes of tenure allowed by the Land Acts. These necessitate in each case seeing that the conditions of the lease have been complied with up to the date of conversion, surrender by the lessee of the original lease, computation of new rentals and amendment of the registers, and the issue and registration of the new lease, &c., all of which entails an immense amount of work on the office before the transaction is finally completed, and, as village-homestead special-settlement lessees have recently been allowed to take advantage of the conversion clause of the Act of 1892, the number of applications is increasing very rapidly.

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