

method of administration, and the machinery needed to give effect thereto. It is satisfactory to be able to say that the influence of the Minister among his people is producing most satisfactory results. In many cases deep-rooted prejudices have been overcome, and ignorance dispelled. Elaborate explanations have been given on every point or matter arising out of the consideration of the subject. The results have justified the patient steps which have been taken in securing the voluntary acceptance of the new law by the Native land-owners. Large areas in the several districts have already been, and are now being, transferred to the Maori Land Councils for administration under the Act, which lands will be cut up and thrown open for settlement upon terms advantageous to both races.

LAND FOR SETTLEMENTS.

Including five estates on hand at the beginning of the financial year, twenty-eight estates, comprising 114,672 acres, were committed to the control of the Lands and Survey Department during the year, and of these, eighteen, containing 85,023 acres, were thrown open for selection, with the result that 69,929 acres were selected by 230 persons up to the 31st March last. The principal properties dealt with were the Hatuma (compulsorily acquired) and Manga-a-toro in Hawke's Bay, and the Glenham Estate in Southland. Four estates were opened under the workmen's homes system with fair success. The result of the year's operations is very satisfactory from a settlement point of view.

The number of estates which have been placed on the market since the initiation of the land-for-settlements policy is ninety-seven, comprising 418,720 acres. The number of tenants is 2,033, occupying 386,529 acres, and paying £101,057 14s. annual rental.

I have much pleasure in stating that the progress of the settlers generally is most satisfactory, and it is not too much to claim that the result of the policy has been of immense benefit to the selectors and their families, and to the colony at large.

CROWN LANDS AND SETTLEMENT.

Land-settlement has been developed as far as practicable, though necessarily the failing supply of suitable Crown lands, and the great difficulty of extending roads into the more distant and inaccessible portions of the colony, tended to limit the actual area taken up and occupied under the various systems of the Land Act. Notwithstanding these drawbacks, 2,159 selectors took up 1,094,086 acres, of which 572,050 acres are comprised under pastoral runs, the greater portion of the balance being allotted mainly under the residential and improvements conditions of the Act.

The land revenue collected by the Department amounted to £427,138, including £249,619 under the heading "Territorial." The total number of Crown tenants on the departmental registers is 18,521.

Nothing can be of more importance to the colony than the well-being and prosperity of the land-holders, whether under the freehold or various leasehold tenures. It is satisfactory to note that the reports of the Land officers throughout the colony testify on the whole to the general improvement and increased productiveness of the Crown tenants' holdings.

No efforts will be spared on the part of the Government to do all that is possible to aid and encourage the small settlers until they shall have attained an assured position.

FORESTS AND PLANTATIONS.

In pursuance of the decision of the Government that the remaining areas of forest in the colony should be conserved and dealt with in a systematic manner, the Government have under consideration the whole question of how best to deal with this important matter. Special attention is being given to