

A large proportion of the blocks were notified for selection without all the information which is considered essential to give effect to selection and settlement on the "unsurveyed" system; but the preliminary data and plans were supplemented by additional particulars as the surveys advanced, and the Chief Surveyors endeavoured to place before applicants and the Land Boards all necessary information on the first day applications were receivable, so that the apportionment and disposal of the lands could be dealt with in an intelligent and effective manner. There is published with this report a simple plan, which was transmitted to the Chief Surveyors for their guidance in dealing with Crown lands in their districts.

In this connection, it may be observed that a curtailment of the survey operations is inevitable, as the supply of Crown lands suitable for settlement in the North Island is running out, as it has already in the principal districts of the South Island. The great increase to the staff has enabled the Department to detail surveyors to all and every locality; and they are now scattered throughout the length and breadth of the Crown lands.

RURAL AND SUBDIVISIONAL SECTION SURVEYS.

This is the most practical and remunerative class of work undertaken by the Department; combined with that under the preceding heading, it provides the means for the settlement of the people upon the Crown lands, conduces to the development of the resources of the colony, and the expansion of the volume of production, wealth, and trade.

The output of 607,594 acres is 10,766 acres in excess of the previous year's return, and the cost per acre is much lower; this latter is due to the larger average area of the sections. The total is made up of 138,089 acres in the Auckland District; 54,469 acres in Hawke's Bay; 60,393 acres of good forest-clad lands in Taranaki; Wellington, once noted for the large areas of excellent land available, only returning 37,610 acres for settlement purposes. The 237,171 acres returned by the Chief Surveyor, Marlborough, comprises principally small grazing-runs and large blocks, which were only partly defined, and can hardly be classed as rural sectional survey; and 15,203 acres in Nelson. Westland only contributed 5,933 acres; Canterbury and Otago returned 27,353 and 22,000 acres respectively, comprising principally subdivisions of estates acquired under the Land for Settlements Act; and 9,373 acres were surveyed and plotted in Southland.

The cost per acre amounted to 0.82s., or, deducting the Marlborough contribution, to 1.16s. per acre.

TOWN SURVEYS.

As often previously mentioned, towns have been established throughout the colony almost wherever required; and, as mere villages suffice for the more remote and unattractive lands, surveys of this class are yearly becoming more rare. The total area laid off and mapped amounts to 638 acres, made up of 510 acres in the Auckland District, in the Parawai, Puru (Native), Karewa (Native), and Kawhia Townships; 97 acres in the Mowhanau Township (Wellington); and small areas in existing Townships of Hanmer Springs (Canterbury), Naseby (Otago), Napier and Hatuma (Hawke's Bay), and Kaikoura (Marlborough).

NATIVE LAND COURT.

As a result of thirty-eight years of the active prosecution of widespread surveys under the Native Land Court Acts, for the purpose of enabling Native owners to prove their claims to blocks or subdivisions of the great Maori territories in the North Island, there is now little scope for surveys of this character. The area defined was 400,388 acres in 171 blocks or subdivisions—the bulk of this, comprising 107 divisions and 351,386 acres, is situated in the Auckland District; and nearly all the balance, of 43,416 acres, in Wellington.

The provisions of "The Maori Lands Administration Act, 1900," have doubtless had the effect of curtailing the extent of surveys formerly undertaken for Native Land Court adjudication; at least, as regards original or "papatupu" lands.

Attention has been drawn to the fact that there are sixty-four orders of the Native Land Court for subdivisions in the Chatham Islands, comprising 30,276 acres, for which titles cannot issue until the necessary surveys and plans have been made. Subject to approval, it is proposed, when opportunity offers, to detail a staff surveyor to undertake these surveys, as it has been found that the private surveyors who have entered upon these surveys in the past have experienced great difficulty in some instances in obtaining payment for their work.