

The amount postponed during the year is almost double that of the previous year. This increase can to a large degree be attributed to the effects of the abnormally dry season experienced in many of the land districts.

#### REMISSION OF RENT.

During the year £1,992 was remitted to thirty-six settlers who suffered losses through bush fires and other causes.

#### REVALUATION OF CROWN LEASEHOLDS.

During the year sixty-two holdings were revalued under section 13 of the Land Laws Amendment Act, 1913, as amended by section 14 of the Land Laws Amendment Act, 1914. The capital values were reduced from £108,204 to £77,690, and the annual rentals from £5,042 to £3,602. At the close of the year there were still forty-six applications lodged but not yet dealt with.

#### NATIONAL ENDOWMENT.

The national-endowment lands at the close of the year covered a total area of 8,644,677 acres, of which 6,590,083 was held under lease or license at an annual rental of £107,472. The gross revenue received during the year was £115,201, which will be dealt with in accordance with the statutory provisions governing the endowment.

#### INSPECTIONS BY CROWN LANDS RANGERS.

The statutory inspections carried out by the Crown Lands Rangers covered an area of over 3,000,000 acres, comprised in 6,967 properties. The value of the improvements actually effected showed a marked increase over the amount required by law, as will be seen from a perusal of Table 32 published in the appendix.

#### INSPECTION OF OFFICES.

In November, 1914, an Inspector of Offices was appointed to visit and report upon the work carried out in the district and other offices of the Department. Mr. A. C. Turnbull, the officer appointed, has now completed the first year of such duties, and has inspected the Auckland, Gisborne, Napier, Hokitika, Christchurch, Dunedin, and Invercargill District Offices, furnishing full reports on each. In addition he has submitted special reports on the Head Office and the Forestry Branch offices, as well as on many other matters that came under his notice during his investigations. He was also engaged for some three weeks by the Public Service Commissioner on work for another Department, and acted as relieving officer in the Department when necessary.

As the result of the conference of clerical officers in May, 1914, new systems of office procedure were adopted and duly introduced into District Offices. These related chiefly to records, accounting and collection of land revenue, Land Board minutes, Rangers' inspections, returns, journals, &c. A good deal of the Inspector's time was taken up in assisting to bring these new methods into force. It is pleasing to report that they are being readily adopted in our offices, with good results both as regards efficiency and economy in administration. The aim of the Department to standardize the work in District Offices is therefore brought nearer realization than was the case previously.

A programme of inspection of the remaining District Offices has been arranged, and when completed a general report on the staffing of the various offices with a view to standardizing the same will be submitted.

#### SAND-DUNE RECLAMATION.

Owing to the heavy drain on the public purse due to the present war the extensions of sand-dune reclamation that had been proposed had to be deferred. The Inspector reports that at Waikato Heads the belt of marram that was planted in the spring of 1914 had suffered severely from drought, and that a considerable amount of the grass had died; however, what has survived looks well, and will serve as a supply from which to obtain grass for restocking the failures and for future extension when possible. Behind the marram-belt a contiguous belt was broadcast with tree-lupin seed, but, though it came up well at first, the dry weather that subsequently prevailed destroyed most of it. When money is available it is desirable that the fore-dune be replanted with marram and an autumn sowing of lupin-seed tried to the rear of the marram-belt. The erosion of the coast up to the start of summer had been very severe at the Heads, but then there seemed to be a tendency for the current to revert to the south side of the estuary.

At Run 24, on the Rangitikei coast, the drought also did a great deal of damage to the marram-grass that had been planted in 1913-14. At this locality it had been intended last year to considerably extend operations, but owing to the war the proposal was abandoned until financial conditions are more favourable. A reliable man from the Rotorua plantations was sent down, and he has been occupied in erecting barriers (formed of drift-wood from the beach) in the wind-channels with the object of making a regular fore-dune prior to the planting of trees to the rear. This method of forming an even fore-dune is very inferior to the orthodox palisading, but for the latter there is no suitable timber or stakes available within reasonable distance. There have also been split and stacked about sixty good posts that will come in when fencing is done here. A small experimental plot was planted with different trees to ascertain those most suitable for the locality when tree-planting is started.

The Inspector reported that the grant to the Motutara Domain Board had been well spent in planting with marram the whole of the sand area in the Domain.

As regards future work, until the war is over it is not proposed to do anything beyond the minimum necessary to maintain what has already been done.