

1920.
NEW ZEALAND.

LAND FOR SETTLEMENTS ACT, 1908

(REPORT ON THE).

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly in compliance with Section 85 of the Land for Settlements Act, 1908.

The LAND PURCHASE CONTROLLER to the MINISTER OF LANDS.

SIR,—

Wellington, 27th July, 1920.

I have the honour to submit the report of the Department for the year ending the 31st March, 1920.

Land for Settlements.

The number of estates offered during the year was less than that for the previous one, being 461, of an acreage of 619,680 acres. The whole was considered for soldier settlements. The area purchased and completed is 176,836 acres, of a value of £1,929,435. Besides there was purchased for individual soldiers 25,061 acres, of a value of £423,017. Further areas were purchased but not yet taken over—viz., 17,235 acres, valued at £583,281, for ballot, and 16,814 acres, valued at £403,466, for individual soldiers. The areas dealt with show a large increase on previous years.

Amongst the areas secured is part of the Hill Springs Estate, adjoining Teviot—9,820 acres, with 28,600 of Crown leasehold given in. This was purchased from Mr. J. A. Pannett, and is being surveyed and roaded as part of the Teviot Settlement. It is hoped to have the whole ready for selection next February. As in the case of Teviot, the stock was purchased and will be available for the soldiers later on. The same course was followed in the case of Waitohi Peaks; and the owner, Mr. George Rutherford, has rendered the Department generous assistance in dealing with the stock since purchase. The soldiers on these blocks will be able to start with established flocks used to the country.

The general demand for land, especially for dairying and grazing, is extremely keen, and prices are being paid for properties far beyond what the members of the Boards feel they can safely recommend. A large number of the places offered present insuperable difficulties in the way of roading and subdividing into reasonable areas, and the want of suitable homestead-sites. The lot of a new settler is far from being a happy one, the cost of all farm requirements being practically prohibitive, and many are unprocurable.

The Land Laws Amendment Act of last session provided for the setting up of Local Boards in each of the Land Districts with the view of expediting the purchase of lands and making recommendations for the consideration of the Dominion Board. The Dominion Board, which was also established under the Act, is the controlling authority and responsible for all recommendations to the Government. A soldier representative has a seat on each Board. It is yet too early to express an opinion as to the desirability or otherwise of the change. Something, however, had to be done, as it was impossible for the one Board to get over the whole of the Dominion.

Several cases of alleged aggregation have been inquired into and, so far, in nearly every instance a satisfactory explanation has been forthcoming. The mode of procedure does not render the detection of aggregation an easy matter. Something more is still required.

Land Settlement Finance Act.

As was the case last year, there were no transactions under this Act.

Appended will be found the usual tables.

JOHN D. RITCHIE,
Land Purchase Controller.

TABLE A.—NUMBER OF PROPERTIES CONSIDERED DURING THE YEAR ENDING 31ST MARCH, 1920.*

Land District.	Number.	Area of Estates offered.
		Acres.
Auckland	81	92,257
Hawke's Bay	65	115,752
Taranaki	26	39,567
Wellington	100	111,561
Marlborough	24	56,395
Nelson	24	36,992
Westland	14	7,741
Canterbury	78	76,482
Otago	37	59,016
Southland	12	23,917
Totals	461	619,680

* In addition areas have also been offered direct to the Local Land Purchase Boards.