

Although the analysis and survey of soil is not one of the functions of this Department, it may be mentioned that in the course of the operations of the Land Drainage Branch, more particularly when bores have been put down in the Hauraki Plains, a certain amount of valuable information has from time to time been obtained and published in the annual reports on Hauraki Plains drainage, &c. Moreover, the very nature of the work undertaken by the Drainage Engineers materially assists in our knowledge of the composition of the soil in the localities drained and reclaimed, and farmers who subsequently settle on the land will benefit by a knowledge of the particulars published. Such information is carefully collated and recorded for future reference and utilization, and every endeavour is made to co-ordinate the work of the Department with that of other Departments of the State.

GISBORNE LAND DISTRICT.

Since the passing of the Land Act, 1877, when Land Boards were first constituted, the Poverty Bay district was administered by the Auckland Office until the passing of the Land Act Amendment Act, 1887, and then by the Napier Office and Hawke's Bay Land Board. A local land office was established at Gisborne, and a local land officer and staff dealt primarily with land matters in the Poverty Bay portion of the land district, the principal land office of the district at Napier completing transactions. The Hawke's Bay Land Board also sat once a quarter at Gisborne. It was, however, deemed advisable to alter the land district and improve the status of the local office, and by Order in Council and Proclamation appearing in the *Gazette* of the 3rd August, 1922, a separate land district was constituted as from the 1st April, 1923, comprising the Waiapu, Waikohu, and Cook Counties, with part of Wairoa County, whilst Gisborne Land Office was appointed the principal land office of the district. Before the new district came into being, however, it was considered advisable to enlarge its boundaries, and a subsequent Order in Council and Proclamation published in the *Gazette* of the 15th March, 1923, constituted the Gisborne Land District, and, in addition to the previously named counties, included the Opotiki County, the exact boundaries of the district being defined in detail. The Land Board for the new district was appointed, and consists of Messrs. V. I. Blake (Commissioner of Crown Lands) as Chairman, J. H. Reed, R. H. Wickstead, and A. J. Cameron; whilst the election of a member by the Crown tenants of the district is being proceeded with. The first meeting of the Board was held on the 19th April, and proved very successful, a large attendance of the public and representatives of Parliament, various professions, and commercial interests testifying to the appreciation of the Government's action in establishing the new district.

It may be mentioned that special care was taken to provide an adequate staff for the office, and it is worthy of note that this has been done with practically no additional cost to the country, owing to rearrangement of staff in other offices.

LEGISLATION.

The following is a brief summary of the legislation affecting the operations of this Department which was passed during the last session of Parliament:—

Land Laws Amendment Act, 1922.—This Act contains nineteen sections. Its principal provisions are as follow: Section 2 enables small areas of unoccupied Crown or settlement land, not exceeding 50 acres, to be incorporated in leases of adjoining land of a similar kind, where deemed expedient, at such increased rent as may be necessary, and this does away with the necessity of issuing separate leases for these small areas. Section 4 provides that when land taken for a public work and not required for such purpose is sold as Crown land the proceeds shall be payable into the Public Works Fund. Section 5 gives facilities for the acquisition of the fee-simple of national-endowment lands within the Hauraki Mining District held under renewable lease or on pastoral license. Section 6 permits the lessee of a small grazing-run to acquire the fee-simple of the whole of his holding even if the area thereof is in excess of that prescribed by statute, provided that the Minister of Lands, on the recommendation of the Land Board, determines that the area so in excess is unsuitable as a separate holding. Section 7 enables owners of leases of small grazing-runs which had expired between the 28th February, 1919, and the 11th February, 1922, to apply for revaluations under section 15 of the Land Laws Amendment Act, 1915. Section 8 gives power by which the owner of a deferred-payment license of rural Crown or settlement land can convert his license to a renewable lease and have the purchase instalments already paid credited as rent. Section 9 enables the owner of a pastoral lease to surrender the same and obtain a new pastoral lease of the area surrendered, together with any adjoining land occupied by him under a temporary grazing license, at such altered rent as the Land Board may fix with the Minister's approval. Section 11 prohibits the burning of any tussock on pastoral runs unless with the prior consent of the Land Board, and subject to such conditions as the Board may impose. Section 19 provides for the payment into the Consolidated Fund of reasonable expenses in connection with the administration of the Cheviot Estate, and of lands purchased out of the Native Land Settlement Account. The remaining sections of this Act are what may be termed "machinery" measures, embodying improvements found necessary as the result of experience.

Surveyors' Institute and Board of Examiners Amendment Act, 1922.—Section 2 of this Act provides that the Surveyor-General shall be Chairman of the Surveyors' Board. Section 4 provides that the Surveyors' Board may make regulations for the conduct of surveys and for ensuring the accuracy of plans and surveys required under any Act relating to or affecting surveys of land, except surveys carried out by or under the direction of the Surveyor-General. Section 5 defines the class of surveys in respect to which the Surveyor-General may make regulations without the collaboration of the Surveyors' Board. Section 6 increases the fees payable to the Board in respect of examinations, qualifications, and certificates.

Swamp Drainage Amendment Act, 1922.—This Act empowers the Minister of Lands to authorize the expenditure out of the Swamp Land Drainage Account of any moneys required for the drainage, reclamation, roading, or otherwise rendering fit for settlement any area of Crown land, including national-endowment land, even if such land is not part of a drainage area constituted under the