

The work of placing the leasing of domain lands on a uniform basis throughout the Dominion was continued, and very satisfactory progress made.

Under the provisions of section 13 of the Land Laws Amendment Act, 1932, rental concessions were granted in thirty-nine cases during the year.

The reservation over the Buffalo Domain at Coromandel was cancelled, and the area of nearly 22 acres sold at a satisfactory figure. The domain had been under the control of a local Domain Board for many years, but had proved incapable of proper development as a sports-ground. It comprised mostly hilly land, with some level to undulating boulder-strewn ground. Cricket and football players used private property near the centre of the town, and this ground is being purchased as a domain. It was to assist in this purchase that authority was obtained for the sale of the old domain, the funds thereby derived being added to certain funds that had become available in Coromandel for the purpose.

The Department was satisfied that the old domain would never make a playing-area, and while the ground which is being acquired is a little on the small side, the area being only a trifle over 4 acres, it is nevertheless well adapted for the purposes of a sports-ground.

The reservation over the Rotomanu Domain, in Westland, was also cancelled during the year. In this case the land concerned (a little over 4 acres) was set apart in 1925 for the use of the local people, who, however, failed to take any interest in the reserve. Under the circumstances it was decided that the reservation should be revoked, in order that the Department might dispose of the land when opportunity offers.

The Reserves and other Lands Disposal Act, 1933, dealt with several matters affecting public domains and requiring special legislation. The reservation for thermal purposes over the Pukaahu Hot Springs Reserve was cancelled, and the land set apart as a public domain. In this case the land dealt with was acquired by the Crown in 1918 for thermal purposes. It contains hot springs of considerable value, and had been controlled by the Whakatane County Council under the provisions of section 13 of the Scenery Preservation Act, 1908. Considerable difficulty had, however, been experienced in administering the reserve under that Act, and it was desired, therefore, that the land should be made a public domain, which action, while effectively preserving public ownership, would at the same time give more effective powers of control in many ways. The legislation made the reserve a public domain under the control of the County Council, and provided also that the Council might deal with matters affecting the reserve at its ordinary meetings without being specially called together as a Domain Board. The land itself has no scenic value, but the springs are popular with the public as a bathing-place, and it is the Council's intention to manage and develop the property for that purpose.

A certain payment made by the Westshore Domain Board, Napier, was validated after full inquiry had been made into all the circumstances of the case.

The Gisborne Borough Council was authorized to join with the Crown in the acquisition of certain land as a public domain, and to raise funds by way of a special loan for the purpose of meeting its share of the financial outlay involved. Under the arrangements made in this case a property of approximately 106 acres situated just outside the borough boundary, and generally known as "The Park," has been acquired as a public domain. The terms of acquisition included the giving in exchange of the old Makaraka Domain, which had never been used for recreation, and the payment of £1,500 in cash from the Makaraka Domain Account plus £2,500 in borough debentures. The land acquired will be a good asset to the borough for sports, picnics, and camping-site purposes. Gisborne has not been particularly well endowed with open spaces, and the proposal provided a good opportunity of acquiring an extensive public park for the town and district.

At Purakauiti, in Otago, an area of some 37 acres of provisional State forest land was set apart as a recreation reserve under the authority of special legislation. There was no recreation reserve in the vicinity, and the settlers requested that the provisional State forest area, together with certain adjoining Crown land, should be set aside for the purpose. The land is admirably suited for domain purposes, and the State Forest Service had no objection to the change of purpose of the reservation. Arrangements were completed during the year for the area dealt with in the legislation, together with the adjoining Crown land, to be brought under Part II of the Public Reserves, Domains, and National Parks Act, 1928, as a public domain under the control of a Domain Board of local residents.

The Havelock Commonage Trustees, who control an area of some 3,000 acres, were authorized, subject in each case to the approval of the Minister, to make grants from the Commonage funds to the funds of the Waitahuna Domain Board for expenditure on the improvement of the Waitahuna Domain.

PART II.—NATIONAL PARKS.

No new parks were constituted during the year, nor were any additions made to existing reserves. Extracts from the annual reports of the Tongariro, Egmont, and Arthur Pass National Park Boards are appended hereto, and it will be noted that lack of financial resources has seriously hampered these bodies in carrying out their functions. In this connection it is to be hoped that when financial conditions become a little more normal a reasonable State allocation will be made annually for National Park purposes. This matter of finance has been mentioned before, but will bear repetition.

Reference is also made in the reports to the detrimental effects of browsing animals. It is becoming more and more evident that this menace to the welfare of the National Park flora must be ruthlessly dealt with.

It is pleasing to see that more general use of the parks is being made as mountain play-grounds. The various clubs and other associations interested in tramping, climbing, and alpine sports generally take a keen interest in the parks, and have proved of considerable assistance to the controlling Boards in many ways.