

pastoral land before survey should be received and carefully considered. The effect of this would be that, instead of the Government having to decide as to the form and size of sections in which land would sell best, purchasers would make their applications, whether for large or small areas, in such a way as suited the character of the country and their own requirements. This would certainly result in a very considerable saving to the department; and, if the regulations were properly framed and acted upon, no such power as there is at present to secure the occupation of large blocks by making small purchases would exist.

Evil, if unchecked, will increase.

The importance of this question is increased by the fact that the lands to be dealt with in future are generally of an inferior or of a broken and rugged character. While the surveys were confined chiefly to the more level land, the evils were small compared with those which may be anticipated unless the change we advocate is made. If the same system is pursued in future, both useless expenditure and the other attendant evils we have referred to will be largely increased.

Practicable road-lines required.

Before, however, any sales are allowed, and as a preliminary to all sectional surveys, either before or after purchase, we would point out, in the strongest terms, the importance of laying out the road-lines. This, however, must not be done, as has been too often the case in the past, merely on paper. They must be carefully located lines, so situated as to be the most economical for construction as well as best for the future traffic. That this has hitherto been so generally neglected is a matter for the greatest regret, as the expense it will entail on the local bodies who will ultimately have to form those roads will be a serious charge on their resources. The difficulty certain to arise from this growing evil is fully recognized by all who have any knowledge of the subject.

Instructions as to grades, &c., in road-lines ignored.

The importance of the question was urged upon Parliament in the session of 1878; and, in consequence of a resolution then passed, instructions have since been given by the Surveyor-General to take great care in laying off all road-lines, and this has to be done in accordance with certain general conditions as to grades, &c. To carry out these instructions in difficult country has involved much additional labour and expense, without immediate results being apparent; and the consequent tendency to ignore them, particularly in contract surveys, has been great, and in many cases irresistible. It is true that in looking at the more recent maps a large number of road-lines are shown, but on making inquiries we find that they do not fulfil the necessary conditions to render them suitable for construction. To such an extent has this occurred that it will probably prove in many instances better to abandon the existing sectional surveys as useless and lay out proper roads, than to attempt to form those shown on the plans.

Suggestions of future saving.

In many of the land districts we are aware that the locally-applicable portions of the Land Act require that sections shall not exceed a certain maximum size, and this size is one into which it is useless to subdivide poor, rough pastoral country with any idea that the blocks will be bought separately. An alteration of the law in this respect appears to us to be necessary if wasteful expenditure is to be avoided. We also suggest, with a view of saving expense in completing arrears of surveys, that when adjoining owners each hold a considerable number of sections the boundary-lines on which are altogether unsuited for fencing, a great saving might be made if authority were given to merely lay off such dividing-line as the owners may jointly agree on; this being done on condition that the department will then be relieved from the necessity for making the sectional surveys.

Outside pressure.

The department will, it is to be hoped, no longer be subjected to that outside pressure to prepare for sale land for which there is only an imaginary demand. Should this be so, the whole question can be dealt with on sound business-like principles, and we believe the result will be that the large annual expense of this department may be greatly reduced. During the prevalence of the eager speculative demand for land which till recently existed, such recommendations as we now venture to make would have been useless. Now, however, that this feeling has subsided, we hope that a calm consideration of the best way of dealing with the small portion that remains of good agricultural Crown lands which is at all likely to sell, will be possible.