

1893.
NEW ZEALAND.

DEPARTMENT OF LANDS AND SURVEY

(ANNUAL REPORT ON).

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

The SECRETARY for CROWN LANDS and SURVEYOR-GENERAL to the Hon. the
MINISTER of LANDS.

SIR,—

Department of Lands and Survey, Wellington, 24th June, 1893.

I have the honour to transmit herewith the annual reports on the operations of the Lands and Survey Department for the period ending the 31st March, 1893.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. John McKenzie,
Minister of Lands.

S. PERCY SMITH,
Secretary for Crown Lands and Surveyor-General.

LANDS.

THE year which closed on the 31st March, 1893, witnessed the introduction of new land-laws, those contained in "The Land Act, 1892," which came into force on the 1st November of that year. For the first time in the history of the colony a uniform system of administering the lands has become possible, the various systems hitherto peculiar to several of the land districts having been swept away by the repeal of "The Land Act, 1885," and its amendments. These different methods of dealing with the public lands were the remnants of provincialism, the necessity for which no longer exists. Immediately on the passing of the Act in November, 1892, the whole of the lands which were then open for selection under the previous Acts were prepared for readvertising under the new Act, a proceeding which entailed a considerable amount of work, as all the prices had to be recalculated on a new basis. The first sales, or selections, took place in the middle of December, 1892.

Under the powers contained in the Act, instructions to applicants for special-settlement associations have been drawn up, and were gazetted on the 3rd February, 1893. These modify previous regulations by bringing them into conformity with the new Act. The principal change taking place was the substitution of a lease-in-perpetuity tenure for that of the perpetual lease; or, in other words, the introduction of 999-year leases, based on a 4-per-cent. rental without periodical revaluations, in place of thirty-year leases, on a 5-per-cent. rental with recurring valuations, which had hitherto been the law. The instructions further provide, as a guarantee of the *bona fides* of the applicants, that the costs of survey shall be deposited with the applications, a provision which was not required under those previously in force. The regulations for village homestead and other systems have been published, as usual, from time to time. The principal alteration in the Land Act which affects the village homestead selections is the substitution of 100 acres for 50 acres as the limit of the size of the sections.

On the acquisition of the Cheviot Estate by the Crown it was found more convenient that the lands comprised therein should be administered from Christchurch rather than from Nelson, within which district the estate was situated. In consequence, an Order in Council under the 22nd section of "The Land Act, 1892," was published in the *Gazette* of the 21st February, 1893, p. 273, altering the boundaries of the two land districts by adding Cheviot to the Canterbury District.

It will be obvious from the fact of "The Land Act, 1892," having only come into operation on the 1st of November last that its operations are practically confined to the quarter of the year ending on the 31st March last. The returns for this year are therefore in great measure a continuation of similar transactions to those of previous years, the new transactions under the Act of 1892 being in some degree overshadowed by those under the previous Acts. The continuation of transactions under the repealed Acts must of necessity be a feature of these reports for some years, until the particular tenures held under those Acts are either worked out or exchanged. No very fruitful comparisons can therefore be instituted between the old and new Acts until the latter has had time to develop its particular features.