

REPORT OF THE SURVEYOR-GENERAL TO THE MINISTER OF LANDS.

SIR,—

Department of Lands and Survey, Wellington, 5th June, 1899.

I have the honour to furnish the following report on "the condition and settlement" of the lands acquired under "The Land for Settlements Act, 1894," and its amendments, in terms of section 39 (2) of the Act. The report refers to lands which have been handed over to this department for administration up to the 31st March last.

There have been fewer estates dealt with during the year ended the 31st March last than in the previous period, the number for 1899 being seven, containing an area of 90,708 acres 1 rood 4 perches, whilst that for 1898 was fourteen, of a total area of 58,691 acres 1 rood 31 perches.

The following table shows the new estates which have been handed over to this department and dealt with during the year, and the attached table shows various particulars respecting them, and also of all the estates that have been dealt with since the policy of acquiring estates from private owners was initiated in 1894.

ESTATES OFFERED for SELECTION during the TWELVE MONTHS ending 31st March, 1899.

Land District and Name of Estate.	Area of Estate.			Number of Selectors.	Area unselected, 31st March, 1899.			Annual Rental payable of Lands leased.			Date opened for selection.
	A.	R.	P.		A.	R.	P.	£	s.	d.	
Auckland—											
Rangiatea ...	4,004	0	0	17	753	0	0	564	6	2	June 22, 1898.
Karapiro ...	2,270	3	9	13	69	1	0	394	15	0	Oct. 21, 1898.
Hawke's Bay—											
Mahora ...	1,133	3	0	27	268	1	27	1,260	1	8	Mar. 22, 1899.
Willows ...	775	1	36	16	190	1	0	573	10	4	Mar. 22, 1899.
Canterbury—											
Pawaho ...	52	0	18	21	7	0	22	108	14	6	April 5, 1898.
Waikakahi ...	48,248	0	21	139	6,426	2	11	14,838	14	10	Mar. 20, 1899.
Marlborough—											
Starborough (leasehold surrendered, 1,625 ac.)	34,224	0	0	43	3,949	0	0	4,893	10	10	Mar. 13, 1899.
Totals ...	90,708	1	4	276	11,663	2	20	£22,633	13	4	

Since the 31st March, the greater part of the area of 11,663 acres unselected at that date has been taken up.

In addition to the foregoing figures there have been thirty-five selections in the estates acquired prior to 31st March, 1898. Of the four estates at that date which showed the largest amount of unselected land, viz.: Okauia, Pomahaka, Otahu, and Beaumont (total, 12,896 acres), 7,592 acres have been selected during the year, which, together with other selections, only leaves in the hands of the Government an area of 4,759 acres. Details of all the selections will be found in the accompanying table.

The forfeitures for non-compliance with the conditions of the leases, together with surrenders, amounted to thirty, the area so forfeited being 2,643 acres, 3 roods, 20 perches, let for a rental of £463 9s. 4d. Most of the forfeited sections have been relet.

The arrears of rent on the 31st March amounted to £2,938 6s. 9d., which was owing by 134 lessees, or an average of £22 per selector.

The reports of the Commissioners on the different estates will be found in the Annual Report of the Lands and Survey Department of this year, and from these it will be seen that considerable progress has been made on each estate. The effects of the dry weather of last year, together with some high winds when the crops were coming on this year, were still felt at the date of the reports, and the arrears of rent are in large measure due to those causes, which are, however, only temporary in their operation.

The number of estates acquired under the Act, and which have been offered for selection, is fifty-six, containing an area of 243,947 acres (in which are included 3,112 acres of Crown land, being leases held by the former owners but now surrendered and dealt with as part of the estates). On these estates, at the 31st March last, there were 3,077 persons residing, the number of houses being 813, whilst the value of the improvements on the estates amounted to £129,133 18s. 9d.

The total cost of the estates purchased to 31st March, 1899 =	£ 1,170,305
Cost of roads, surveys, administration, and preliminary expenses	53,862
	<u>1,224,167</u>
Less cost of Richmond Brook Estate, not yet selected	21,921
	<u>£1,202,246</u>
The lands disposed of are let at an annual rental of	£57,747
The lands unlet (exclusive of roads, unlet reserves, &c.) are valued at a rental of	4,503
	<u>£62,250</u>