

nature and extent of undeveloped lands available and suitable for either immediate or deferred development. Surveys are being carried out on a county basis, and the Department is indebted to County Councils for their co-operation in supplying details of undeveloped areas within county boundaries. From time to time the claim has been made that there are vast areas of available Crown land which are capable of easy development, but until a land-utilization survey has been completed the exact position will not be disclosed. It should be remembered also that before any worth-while effort can be made to bring further undeveloped areas into pasture, adequate supplies of fertilizer must be assured. Practically the whole of our imported supplies of phosphate are at present necessary to maintain the fertility of existing grassed lands, and it would obviously be most unwise to undertake any large-scale scheme for speedy development of our undeveloped resources without first planning for an adequate supply of fertilizer.

During the year 40 applications for revaluations of Crown leases and licences in terms of section 216 of the Land Act, 1924, were finally dealt with, and reductions in capital value totalling £34,873 were approved. Applications by 11 high-country pastoral run holders for a review of their annual rentals in terms of section 277 of the Land Act, 1924, were also considered. In these cases reductions in rentals amounting to £1,595 were approved.

The task of dealing with the heavy volume of applications for consent to transactions filed under the Servicemen's Settlement and Land Sales Act, 1943, has meant another year of constant pressure for all concerned. Statistics covering transactions under this legislation are set out later in this report.

LEGISLATION

The year has been a momentous one for the Department so far as legislation is concerned, and it was most gratifying to see the planning and work of many months, indeed of years, brought to fruition. The principal measure from the departmental viewpoint was the Land Act, 1948, which consolidated and brought up to date existing laws relating to Crown land. Also of major importance was the Land Valuation Court Act, 1948, which established one Tribunal to adjudicate on all matters affecting the value of land. Besides the two principal measures, there was an amendment to the Servicemen's Settlement and Land Sales Act, 1943, and the usual Reserves and Other Lands Disposal Act.

LAND ACT, 1948

The original Land Act was enacted in 1877, and prior to 1948 new Acts consolidating the many amendments and variations in the land laws had been passed on three occasions, the last being in 1924. There had been many amendments to the land laws since the 1924 consolidation; furthermore, the Land Act was operated in conjunction with other Acts affecting lands of the Crown—namely, the Land for Settlements Act, the Education Reserves Act, the Small Farms Act, and other Acts of comparatively minor importance. Although amending land legislation frequently added another tenure on which Crown land could be selected it did not often abolish an existing tenure, or if it did it did not affect any lands already held under that tenure. This resulted in Crown lands being held on a multiplicity of tenures with varying conditions according to the date of selection. The resulting complexity of tenures and legislation made administration both difficult and cumbersome.

The Land Act, 1948, consolidated all enactments relating to lands of the Crown and abolished the distinctions between ordinary Crown land—that is, land subject to the Land Act, 1924—settlement land, Education reserves, and small-farms land; all these lands are now simply Crown land subject to and administered under the Land Act, 1948. The numerous tenures under which Crown land could be held (approximately forty different tenures) are replaced by four principal ones—sale for cash, sale on deferred payments, renewable lease, and pastoral lease or licence.