

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL to Hon. the MINISTER of LANDS.

SIR,—

Department of Lands and Survey, Wellington, 23rd June, 1900.

I have the honour to furnish herewith that portion of the report relating to "the condition and settlement" required by section 39 (2) of "The Land for Settlements Act, 1894."

The report is confined to those estates which had been acquired by the Land Purchase Board prior to the 31st March, 1900, and which have been handed over to the Department of Lands and Survey to be dealt with.

The accompanying tables will furnish details as to each estate acquired since the Act came into force, and the summary given below will show the new estates offered to the public during the twelve months ended the 31st March last. There were nine new estates offered, besides four allotments purchased in order to furnish homestead-sites for pastoral lands hitherto without them. The total area offered for selection this last year was 45,059 acres in nine estates, and 318 acres in four homesteads, an area considerably less than dealt with the preceding year, though the number of properties is greater. In the report of the Department of Lands and Survey for the current year will be found a good deal of detail respecting each of the estates purchased to date.

ESTATES OFFERED for SELECTION during the Year ended 31st March, 1900.

Land District and Name of Estate.	Area of Estate.			Number of Selectors.	Number of Original Applications.	Area unselected, 31st March, 1900.			Annual Rental payable on Lands leased.		Date when offered for Selection.
	A.	R.	P.			A.	R.	P.	£	s. d.	
Auckland—											
Fencourt ..	7,105	3	5	25	24	2,471	1	22	1,142	7 10	12 March, 1900.
Wellington—											
Ohakea ..	1,745	1	30	12	25	363	3	9	898	11 6	27 December, 1899.
Te Matua ..	702	0	19	13	17	..			527	7 4	27 December, 1899.
Marlborough—											
Richmond Brook ..	5,854	0	0	11	40	..			1,313	13 4	18 August, 1899.
Canterbury—											
Tamai ..	41	0	28	30	15	7	0	0	191	0 4	26 June, 1899.
Takitu ..	9,713	0	37	4	17	1,494	0	0	931	10 4	1 March, 1900.
Pareora No. 2 ..	8,132	0	31	31	220	484	0	37	3,495	10 0	22 March, 1900.
Four homesteads ..	318	1	12	4	4	..			70	0 2	
Otago—											
Janefield ..	147	0	2	20	31	12	0	0	256	9 0	15 Sept., 1899.
Elderslie ..	11,618	2	4	24	50	3,501	0	11	2,981	12 4	30 March, 1900.
Totals ..	45,377	3	8	174	443	8,333	1	39	11,808	2 2	

The area unselected on the 31st March last seems large, but this has been considerably reduced since that date by further selections. Some few portions of the estates were purposely withheld from selection for a time. In the case of Fencourt a most unfortunate fire occurred just before the day of selection, which destroyed the grass and some of the surface-soil, and consequently this part remains unselected at present.

In addition to the 174 selectors shown in the above table, other selections in the estates previously acquired took place, making the total number for the year to be 316, which number is exclusive of several holders of miscellaneous leases.

The Commissioners' reports speak favourably of the condition and settlement on these estates as a whole. Some few are still suffering from drawbacks, due to natural and other causes, which are, however, of a temporary nature, whilst the bulk of the estates are flourishing, and appear to be well established.

The arrears of rent owing by 213 selectors out of a total number of 1,630, amounted to £7,193 on the 31st March. During the year thirty-six selectors had their properties forfeited for noncompliance with the conditions of the leases, the rentals in those cases amounting to £1,130 9s. The surrenders during the year numbered ten, the rentals of which amounted to £142 9s. It is the rule that forfeited or surrendered sections are re-offered to the public as soon as possible, and they are very generally taken up again.

The total number of estates acquired, and which have been offered for selection, is sixty-nine, covering an area of 289,660 acres, out of which 267,991 acres have been leased in farms, &c., whilst 6,278 acres have been absorbed in roads and reserves, and 15,390 acres remained unlet on the 31st March last. These figures exclude eight estates acquired but not offered for selection up to the close of the year, as they could not be prepared in time. They have since been offered, and nearly the whole disposed of.