

1903.
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, 23rd July, 1903.

I have the honour to submit herewith the annual report on the operations of the Department of Lands and Survey for the twelve months ending the 31st March, 1903.

I have, &c.,

J. W. A. MARCHANT,

Secretary for Crown Lands and Surveyor-General.

The Hon. T. Y. Duncan, Minister of Lands.

FOLLOWING the order and arrangement of the last annual report, the first subject calling for remark is,—

CROWN LANDS OPENED FOR SELECTION.

The difficulty of providing lands suitable for settlement, referred to in the previous report, necessitated a searching examination of areas which had hitherto been considered too remote, inaccessible, and in some districts too unattractive to be surveyed and roaded. It is safe to assume that a very large proportion of the remaining Crown lands comprise mountainous and waste tracts which, though unsuitable for grazing stock, may nevertheless prove rich in minerals, and are certainly immensely valuable owing to the extent and diversity of the magnificent and unique scenery and natural wonders with which New Zealand is endowed.

It having been decided to throw open for selection and settlement all the remaining land which might be considered capable of profitable occupation and development, the Survey staff, as stated in the accompanying Survey Report, was largely supplemented; and, consequently, particulars and provisional sale plans were furnished, upon which the Land Boards and Commissioners of Crown Lands recommended the throwing-open of numerous blocks of land.

As the result of short leases under the pastoral and miscellaneous license systems, and also in consequence of forfeitures and surrenders, and the necessity for reclassification, revaluing, and reopening undisposed-of Crown lands, it follows that a considerable portion of the public estate passes through the hands of the Land Boards, not once only, but in some cases periodically. I have therefore followed the alteration introduced last year and shown in Table A the areas offered for the first time, and those which were reopened during the year for selection or disposal.

The figures for ordinary Crown lands under the two heads respectively are—Opened for first time, 553,915 acres; previously opened, 1,193,401 acres. Those under the Land for Settlements Acts are—Opened for first time, 89,291 acres; previously opened, 4,209 acres.

The special efforts made by the Lands and Survey staff to prepare and submit lands for selection resulted in considerable additions to the aforesaid areas in the quarter following the close of the financial year, when the total figures amounted to 593,707 acres of rural lands opened and 1,124,087 acres of pastoral areas submitted to competition.