

SOUTHLAND.

A comparison of this year's returns with those of 1907-8 will show that there are now 2,120 Crown tenants in Southland, as against 2,069 at the end of last year, while the additional area held is 5,288 acres. The gross revenue for the year is £32,040 15s. 6d., being about the same as that of last year.

It was anticipated that two large blocks of land—one of 6,500 acres near Invercargill, and the other of 10,000 acres west of the Waiau—would have been open for selection during the year, but the former only was offered, the larger block being withheld pending its withdrawal from the Otago Mining District. The object of this withdrawal is that the land may be offered for selection under the optional system, the occupation-with-right-of-purchase tenure being the favourite in Southland. Had this block been available for settlement during the year the land transactions would have been much increased. During the year the last of the deferred-payment selections has been made freehold. That tenure is therefore now extinct so far as Southland is concerned. Section 138 of "The Land Act, 1908," has been made use of by allowing a number of settlers near Oraki to increase their holdings, a block of 1,200 acres (old sawmill workings) having been cut up for that purpose.

ARREARS OF RENT.

It is satisfactory to note that the arrears of rent at the close of the year were slightly in decrease of last year's arrears.

FREEHOLD TITLES ISSUED.

Provisional titles to the number of forty-one over an aggregate area of 9,037 acres were issued by the Receiver of Land Revenue. The subjoined table shows the various tenures:—

Tenure.	Selectors.	Area.		
		A.	R.	P.
Deferred payment	4	5,946	1	14
Perpetual lease	4	888	0	36
Lease in perpetuity	2	1,174	2	12
Occupation with right of purchase	3	171	1	22
Cash under "The Land Act, 1892"	11	767	3	6
Auction-sales	17	88	3	5
	41	9,037	0	15

TRANSFERS.

The total number of transfers completed during the year is made up as under:—

Tenure.	Lessees.	Area.	
		Acres.	
Lease in perpetuity	56	9,581	
Occupation with right of purchase	20	5,205	
Perpetual lease	9	1,077	
Pastoral runs	6	24,066	
Miscellaneous leases	9	6,655	
Mining district land occupation leases	1	49	
Sawmill areas	2	300	
	103	46,933	

RESERVATIONS.

Up to the present 3,494,887 acres in this district has been permanently reserved, chiefly for the preservation of flora and fauna, and for scenic purposes. Of this acreage, 284,469 acres has been reserved during the past year.

SAWMILLING INDUSTRY.

At the present time there are sixty-three sawmills in this district, which command rights to cut over sawmill areas and reserves aggregating 36,753 acres. During the past six months the industry has fallen back from various causes, and several mills have had to shut down. During the year there has been a revision of the Timber Regulations, which it is hoped will enable the Crown and State forests to be administered with greater satisfaction than hitherto, both to the sawmillers and to the Government. As the industry gives employment to a large number, and in various ways contributes largely to the revenue of the Dominion, it is to be hoped that the present decline may be only temporary.

BUSH-FIRES.

Fortunately, there has not been in any large way a repetition of the disastrous fires of the two preceding years. There was a small burn in some old mill-workings in Seaward Bush, necessitating the sowing of about 150 acres with grass-seed. It is highly desirable that a lot of these old worked-out sawmill areas should be withdrawn from State forest, cut up, and opened for selection as soon as possible.

LAND BOARD MEETINGS.

During the year there have been thirteen meetings of the Land Board, several of which have been two-day meetings, the business having been on these occasions of a troublesome nature, and requiring very careful consideration.