

ANNUAL REPORT.

The UNDER-SECRETARY FOR LANDS to the Right Hon. the MINISTER OF LANDS.

SIR,—

Department of Lands, Wellington, 25th May, 1909.

I have the honour to submit herewith the thirty-second annual report of the Department of Lands, which also shortly touches upon its subsidiary branches, the full reports on which will be laid before Parliament as usual.

I have, &c.,

WM. C. KENSINGTON,

Under-Secretary for Lands.

The Right Hon. Sir Joseph George Ward, P.C., K.C.M.G., Minister of Lands.

As a commencement to the annual report of 1908-9, it is not out of place to state that the Lands Department of the Dominion has entered upon the fifty-first year of its existence, and therefore is one of the oldest of the Government Departments. The first Minister or Secretary for Lands held office from 1858 to 1861. It is also interesting to trace the successive legislation dealing generally with the Crown lands of New Zealand, quite apart from the Provincial Administrations, which came to an end in 1876. In 1841 the Legislative Council passed "The Land Claims Ordinance, 1841"; but the first statute dealing with Crown lands was "The Crown Lands Ordinance, 1849," passed in the tenth session of the Legislative Council. The Legislative Council terminated, and its place was taken by the General Assembly, which in its first session, in 1854, passed the Waste Lands Act. This was followed in 1858 by "The Waste Lands Act, 1858." Then came "The Crown Lands Act, 1862," whilst in 1877 the first general Colonial Act was passed, applying to the lands in every district throughout New Zealand. Following upon it came "The Land Act, 1885," which divided New Zealand into land districts, each with its own Commissioner and a Land Board. It was followed by "The Land Act, 1892," and its amendments, which were all merged and consolidated in "The Land Act, 1908," under which the lands are now being administered.

AMENDMENT OF REGULATIONS.

The Consolidated Statutes of 1908 necessitated the rearrangement and reissue of all the regulations dealing with Crown lands, and many additional regulations were found necessary and have been brought into operation. A complete revision of the Crown Forest and State Forest Regulations has also been given effect to.

LAND OPENED FOR SELECTION DURING YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH, 1909.

A glance at the schedule appearing below will show that the output of Crown lands for the past year has been largely in excess of its predecessor, and comprises a grand total of 2,654,086 acres. The schedule gives the details of how the area is made up under the several systems. Of the 393,846 acres of ordinary Crown lands, opened under the renewable-lease tenure, 306,113 acres were national endowment lands, whilst about 83,000 acres were opened under renewable lease because they were within proclaimed mining districts, and the respective Wardens would not agree to their being opened under the optional system. Then, again, 2,185 acres were opened under renewable lease because they were found to be coal-bearing lands.

Table A.—Land opened during Year 1908-9.

District.	Optional System.	Cash by Auction.	Lease by Auction and Application.	Village Allotments.	Pastoral Runs.	Small Grazing-runs.	Renewable Lease.		Totals.
							Crown Land.	Land for Settlements.	
	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.
Auckland ..	57,124	119	969	167	141,794	10,350	32,605	33,788	276,916
Hawke's Bay ..	21,375	4	18	53	11,296	26,870	1,072	2,294	62,982
Taranaki ..	11,363	67	46	..	..	..	14,747	461	26,684
Wellington ..	15,223	150	72	1,088	..	5,622	937	5,274	28,366
Nelson ..	1,005	..	..	..	..	..	281,826	20,115	302,946
Marlborough ..	..	..	526	244	..	..	588	..	1,358
Westland ..	827	..	20	..	786,800	..	56,688	..	844,335
Canterbury ..	7,245	147	748	..	249,801	..	..	28,296	286,237
Otago ..	12,866	93	21	..	662,816	1,227	1,652	21,169	699,844
Southland ..	32,561	92	4,820	..	81,498	..	3,731	1,716	124,418
Totals..	159,589	672	7,240	1,552	1,934,005	44,069	393,846	113,113	2,654,086