

REPORTS ON OTHER WORKS AND SERVICES CONTROLLED BY THE LANDS DEPARTMENT.

Hauraki Plains.

The statutory report which will be laid before Parliament in accordance with the provisions of the Hauraki Plains Act, 1908, will give full particulars of the successful carrying on of the drainage operations. This has resulted in an area of 17,500 acres (including town and suburban areas for auction, and areas of roads and reserves) being ready for handing over to the Auckland Land Board for disposal at the close of the financial year, the land being scheduled for opening in May. For drainage purposes the total moneys raised from the Government Loans to Local Bodies Account under the Hauraki Plains Act, 1908, is £31,000; and since the coming into operation of the New Zealand State-guaranteed Advances Act, 1909 (sections 84 to 86), a further sum of £10,000 has been obtained, making the total sum £41,000. The expenditure from the 20th October, 1908, to the 31st March, 1910, is £33,907, leaving a balance of £7,093 still to credit. It is expected that the opening of the area for selection in May, the sale of the Town of Pipiroa and suburban lands, and the sale of about 550 head of cattle, will place a considerable sum to the credit of the Hauraki Plains Account for further works. It is a matter for congratulation that the value of the 16,398 acres to be opened for selection has been fixed by competent valuers at £75,660. Since the beginning of August, 1909, the general and local charge of the drainage-works and surveys has been under the direct supervision of Mr. J. B. Thompson, District Surveyor, Mr. George Purchas having charge of the drainage operations, and the whole of the operations being generally directed from the Head Office. I must congratulate Mr. J. B. Thompson, and those working with him, upon the enthusiastic and able manner in which all details have been carried out. I anticipate that it will take five years to complete the drainage of the 90,000 acres and the completion of the great canal fifteen miles long, but of the ultimate reclamation of the whole area, and its settlement with a thriving class of settlers, I have no manner of doubt. The details are now all settled as to the manner in which the works shall be carried out from year to year, and every six months areas ready for opening for selection should be available. The next opening of areas for selection will be in November, 1910.

Whangamarino Swamp.

As a fitting corollary to the previous paragraph on the drainage of the Hauraki Plains comes the question of the possibility of draining the considerable area of Crown lands known as the Whangamarino and Maramarua Swamp, Lower Waikato. In order to obtain a reliable basis from which to gauge the possibilities of reclamation, Mr. Breakell, who lately retired from the Hauraki Plains works, was engaged to make a preliminary investigation, and to furnish a report. This report will be found published in full as an appendix. After fully reviewing the whole of the conditions which have led to the formation and retention of the swamp area, Mr. Breakell proceeds to deal with the cause and cure for the above conditions—viz., the congestion of the Waikato River below Mercer. After dealing with the obstructions between Mercer and Tuakau, Mr. Breakell states, "Between Tuakau and the Heads there is a long low flat, about three miles in length, where the river spreads to a width of, I should say, two or three miles, with many small and varying channels. The river here requires restricting, so as to create one definite channel. This could be done by low training or wing walls 15 chains apart, so as to confine the scour; the method of forming these being loose rubble deposited on given lines to the height of, say, 1 ft. above low-water level at spring tides. Beyond this latter-mentioned work I think very little else would be required other than a little dredging from Port Waikato to the point where high-water neap tides reach up the river. From this latter point up to the mouth of the Whangamarino River dredging would be required, and I apprehend that if a channel of, say, 3 chains wide were dredged, and the work hereinbefore proposed lower down the river were performed, the river would gradually scour itself to its original sole, and, with a little assistance, to its original width." If the work as above proposed were performed, the Whangamarino and Maramarua Rivers would be enabled to perform their natural functions." Mr. Breakell states, as will be noted at the end of his report, that a suitable dredge and gear for dredging the Waikato River would probably cost £15,000. Taking the report as a whole, it appears that any sum from £50,000 upwards would be ultimately required, and, as the total area of the swamp is only 19,500 acres, and, moreover, as the principal works required to be undertaken are many miles away from the swamp itself, and the initial cost of dredging and erecting training-walls will be so heavy, the scheme should be put in hand by a specially constituted Drainage Board, subsidised by the Government as far as its own area of Crown swamp is concerned.

Crown Purchases from Maori Owners.

The land-purchase operations during the past year have resulted in additional lands to the extent of 15,588 acres being obtained, the officer who has charge of the operations being Mr. R. A. Paterson,