

ANNUAL REPORT.

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

SIR,—

Department of Lands, Wellington, 30th April, 1910.

I have the honour to submit herewith the annual report of the Department of Lands for the year ended 31st March, 1910, 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 G. Ward, P.C., K.C.M.G., Minister of Lands.

Before entering upon the statistical portion of the annual report of the Lands Department it may be useful to state, in the forefront, that the number of new settlers for the past year, of all classes, amounted to 2,582, who, with their families, may be estimated at 8,000 souls. The total area opened during the year for all classes of applicants amounted to 2,326,037 acres, and the total area disposed of in like manner was 2,431,143 acres. There are at present under survey by the survey staff 1,354,048 acres of Crown land, and also in furtherance of the decision of the Government that all Native-land surveys are to be carried out by the Lands and Survey staff, there are under survey 156,837 acres of Native land, chiefly for the various district Maori Land Boards, for settlement purposes under the Native Land Act, 1909. The subjoined tables set forth the matter in concrete form. Many references have appeared from time to time in the public Press, apparently drawing attention to what they are pleased to style as the dilatory opening of Crown lands in certain parts of the Auckland District—notably in the Counties of Kawhia, Waitomo, West Taupo, and Awakino. The subjoined schedule will show what areas—only recently purchased by the Crown from the Maori owners—are available for settlement, and how they are being dealt with in order to open them for selection as speedily as possible.

Kawhia County.—Area, 8,816 acres. Of this area, 2,717 acres are under survey by Mr. T. Carroll, who has also 12,495 acres under survey for the Maori Land Board. The area under survey by Mr. Carroll is good soil, limestone country, with heavy bush.

Waitomo County.—Area, 37,748 acres. Of this area, 6,691 acres are under survey by Messrs. Edgecumbe and Newton. One-half is open country, and the balance bush. The soil is good, but area cannot be opened until roads are surveyed for long distances through adjoining Maori lands.

West Taupo.—Area, 116,674 acres. This area lies north of the source of the Mokau River, and 24,800 acres of it will be taken in hand shortly by Mr. Galbraith on completion of his present work, but roads of access must be obtained through adjoining Maori lands.

Awakino County.—Area, 10,881 acres. Of this area, 4,000 acres will be taken in hand by Mr. A. D. Newton next spring, as the block is very difficult of access in winter time.

It must be borne in mind that when lands are purchased from the Maori owners they cannot be secured, as a rule, in large consecutive blocks, but each area purchased is more or less isolated from its neighbour. Then, there are no roads of access, and these have to be first explored for, and then surveyed through tracts of land still owned by Maoris. The necessary work of laying off sections for opening depends upon the securing of such suitable roads, which are taken under Governor's Warrant or by Proclamation. No effort is being spared by the field staff to loyally co-operate with the several Commissioners of Crown Lands in preparing land for settlement purposes, and the results are highly creditable to the Surveyor-General and the Chief Surveyors and their staffs. The total number of surveyors employed on salary by the Department amounts to 86, outside of those employed at contract rates for the survey of Crown and Maori lands.