

PURCHASE OF FEE-SIMPLE OF LEASE IN PERPETUITY.

Since the coming into operation of the Act there have been forty-three applications for purchase of the fee-simple. It is difficult to understand how the acquisition of the fee-simple on an increased value can be a satisfactory financial transaction when money costs at the very least 5 per cent., as against 4 per cent. on the lease-in-perpetuity tenure. During the year there were no objections to the valuations made under this system.

"THIRDS," "FOURTHS," AND "HALVES."

There has been an increase in the amount of "thirds" paid over to local bodies, but a falling-off in the amount of "fourths" and "halves." As noticed in previous reports, the bulk of the money paid to local bodies for roadwork is utilised for maintenance, very little new roadwork being undertaken. There have been few complaints by settlers as to the expenditure of their "thirds," the local bodies appearing, as a rule, to give satisfaction in the work that is accomplished with such moneys.

LAND BOARD.

There were nineteen meetings of the Board during the year. In addition to meetings held in Auckland, the Board visited the district from Thames, through Coromandel, Mercury Bay, down to Katikati, Tauranga, and Rotorua, and made recommendations in regard to dealing with Crown lands in those localities. A visit was also paid to the Matamata Settlement, and it gave the members much pleasure to witness its prosperous condition. The Tokatoka Swamp was also visited, and recommendations were made in regard to the drainage. The Board was present at Ngaruawahia at the ballot for sections in Te Akau Block.

LAND REVENUE.

In the Receiver's branch there were 10,591 revenue receipts issued and 143 provisional titles. The Deposit Account transactions totalled £25,708 1s. 9d., and there were 1,832 receipts issued. There were 2,400 transactions and operations on the Deposit Account, amounting to £25,663 4s. 9d.

OFFICE-WORK.

From the foregoing it will be readily seen that such large transactions necessitate considerable office-work. In catering for the requirement of settlers, over 18,000 posters were sent out. There were thirty-seven distinct sales of land, and there were thirty-two ballots. The total number of applications lodged was 5,290, of which 105 were rejected from the ballots. There was an increase in the number of letters, &c., received, but a falling-off in the number despatched, although the total reached the very large number of 75,119. In addition to duties associated with the disposal of land, much time is taken up with the numerous questions which arise in the administration of the Acts which cannot be set out in a quotation of figures.

CONCLUSION.

I have to acknowledge the assistance which has been rendered me by the Chief Clerk and all the officers of this branch of the Department.

ERIC C. GOLD SMITH,
Commissioner of Crown Lands.

HAWKE'S BAY.

THE SETTLEMENT OF CROWN LANDS.

The transactions for the year under this heading may be considered satisfactory. All the allotments offered were well competed for by a good class of settler, and the demand for land still continues. At the present time there are only seven sections available for selection in this land district, four of which are village allotments, and there is every indication that as much land as we can offer will be readily taken up during the coming year. The system recently adopted of the examination by the Land Board of all selectors, whether original or transferee, tends to keep out speculators and undesirables, and will, it is thought, assist in the genuine permanent settlement of the country by the people who really want to live by farming.

The last of the deferred-payment holdings has been converted into fee-simple, but conversions from lease in perpetuity and occupation with right of purchase are not numerous, considering the number of holdings under those tenures.

The revenue for the year was £98,991, an increase of £21,039 over last year. Of this, £1,506 13s. 11d. was from increased rents on renewed small grazing-run leases, and most of the remainder from increased settlement.

DISPOSAL OF REMAINING CROWN LANDS.

It is proposed to offer for sale or selection during the current year an area of 94,813 acres. The following are brief descriptions of the principal blocks:—

Wakarara and Makaretu (8,400 acres): Hilly bush land, varying in altitude from 1,500 ft. to 3,500 ft. The land is particularly well watered, soil good, and healthy sheep country.

Tamaki No. 4 Block (1,815 acres): Mixed forest country, the bush being principally mahoe, tawa, rata, rimu, tawhero, &c. Most of the land is flat or undulating, and will be ploughable when cleared and stumped. The soil on the hills is fair to good, the flats chiefly rich alluvial deposit overlying shingle.

Ngatapa Run, No. 47 (19,649 acres): All hilly, about 14,000 acres covered with forest, which when cleared will make good sheep-farming country. The remainder is open grass land of fair to good