Land-tax.

The amount collected was £628,723, as compared with £642,270 for the previous year, a decrease of £13,547. Honourable members will recollect that this was anticipated in last year's Budget, as I estimated the probable revenue at £625,000. The reduction is owing chiefly to the subdivision of large estates, which necessarily reduces the revenue, but the cause will be recognized as being most satisfactory.

Land and Income Tax.

I estimate the receipts for 1911–12 as follows: Income-tax, £410,000; land-tax, £635,000. These figures are very little in excess of the collection of last year. I have before pointed out to honourable members we cannot expect a recurring increase of land-tax, as it is found the increase resulting from enhanced valuations made from time to time by the Valuation Department is equalled by the diminution in the graduated land-tax caused by the subdivision of estates which has necessarily followed this particular form of taxation.

LAND SETTLEMENT FINANCE ACT.

Very satisfactory progress has been made under this Act. The amendments introduced last session have somewhat simplified the procedure, but further amendments are required to complete the measure.

The total number of associations incorporated or approved under the Act is eighteen, with a membership of 107, and an area of 14,965 acres, valued at £209,577, has been dealt with by them. In addition, there are five other associations under consideration, and eleven proposals to form associations and purchase lands have been declined for various reasons.

The Board has had to exercise very considerable care in dealing with the formation of associations, as it is found that the members are apt to enter into an agreement without due consideration. The responsibilities which each member is supposed to undertake are not well understood, neither are the conditions of purchase in some instances being compiled with. Further safeguards are still very necessary. The system of land purchase and closer settlement provided for by the Act will have a great development when better understood.

LAND FOR SETTLEMENTS ACT.

There have been a considerable number of estates purchased during the year, of a total area of 14,399 acres, and valued at £158,796. The bulk of these have been taken delivery of, and satisfactorily settled.

There is an increasing demand for land, both pastoral and agricultural. Every effort is being made to secure suitable areas at anything like a price that will leave a living-margin to the settler.

NATIVE-LAND SETTLEMENT.

The activity of the Native Land Court and its effect upon the progress towards settlement of Native lands during the past year has been most marked. During the year ended 31st March, 1911, the Native Land Court investigated the ownership of a total area of 186,679½ acres hitherto unclothed with title, and dealt with 833 partitions, affecting an aggregate area of 503,829 acres. In addition to the foregoing, the Court confirmed forty-nine transfers, comprising 11,628 acres, and approved twenty-four leases, of a total area of 5,086 acres. These transfers and leases were in respect of lands not situate within a Maori Land Board district.

MAORI LAND BOARDS.

As to the general settlement of Native lands dealt with by the Maori Land Boards, the position is that during the year some 435 alienations by way of lease were approved, covering a total area of 116,498 acres, and 660 transfers, comprising 78,346 acres, were consented to; while, under Part XVIII of the Native Land Act, 1909, some thirty-seven transactions by way of sale and lease, covering 98,922 acres, were completed, making a total of 293,766 acres dealt with by these Boards by way of approval to arrangements made between Native owners and alienees.

The various Boards administer as vested lands some 975,010 acres, of which area they have issued 422 leases, of a total area of 282,402 acres, and twenty-four transfers, comprising 6,008 acres. The remaining areas are being surveyed into subdivisions, and also roading, &c., preparatory to being placed on the market.