

Crown Land remaining for Future Disposal.

Intimately connected with the question of settlement is the question of the available area of Crown land suitable for selection, and from what sources such area may be supplemented. The appended table shows the estimated area in each land district suitable for fairly close settlement, or suitable only for pastoral purposes. In addition to this there was an area of 1,323,202 acres open for selection at 31st March, 1911, as shown in column 4 of Table I.

TABLE C.—AREA OF CROWN LAND ESTIMATED AS BEING SUITABLE FOR SUBDIVISION AND FUTURE DISPOSAL, AS AT 31ST MARCH, 1911 (EXCLUSIVE OF LAND ALREADY OPEN FOR SELECTION).

District.					Estimated Area suitable for Settlement Purposes.	Estimated Area suitable for Pastoral Purposes.	Total Area of Crown Land remaining for future Disposal.
					Acres.	Acres.	Acres.
Auckland	..	..	..	..	1,039,194	249,554	1,288,748
Hawke's Bay	..	..	..	..	25,532	92,742	118,274
Taranaki	..	..	..	..	293,814	..	293,814
Wellington	..	..	..	..	130,944	106,647	237,591
Nelson ..	..	..	..	..	135,000	1,054,015	1,189,015
Marlborough	..	..	..	..	87,347	98,290	185,637
Westland	..	..	..	..	23,818	70,169	93,987
Canterbury	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Otago ..	..	..	..	..	75,000	58,775	133,775
Southland	..	..	..	..	68,000	299,837	367,837
Totals	..	..	..	..	1,878,649	2,030,029	3,908,678

With regard to the foregoing table, it should be mentioned that out of an estimated area suitable for settlement of 1,878,649 acres, only some 166,900 acres are considered to be first-class land. The answer to the question as to how the present supply of available Crown land may be supplemented is that it may be done from two sources—viz., (1) by the purchase of private estates for subdivision under the provisions of the Land for Settlements Act, 1908, and the Land for Settlements Administration Act, 1909; and (2) by the purchase of Maori lands under the provisions of the Native Land Act, 1909. I may here state that there exists a considerable misapprehension as to the present mode of acquiring Maori land, as it is noticed that some local bodies have addressed petitions to the Minister of Lands requesting him to purchase specified blocks of Native lands. Other local bodies have addressed requests to the Commissioners of Crown Lands and the Land Boards for their respective districts in connection with the purchase of Maori lands. It is therefore highly necessary that it should be clearly understood that the Minister of Lands has now no direct power to purchase Maori lands. This power rests with the Native Land Purchase Board, constituted under the provisions of section 361 of the Native Land Act, 1909; but this Board can only commence the purchase of any specific block of Native land if the owners thereof, or at least some of them, desire to dispose of their interests therein to the Crown. There is no power under the provisions of the Native Land Act, 1909, by which Native land may be acquired compulsorily, nor do the provisions of the Land for Settlements Act apply to this class of land. At the same time, the short experience of the working of the Native Land Act, 1909, indicates that the Native owners are in very many cases willing to sell to the Crown at the fair and reasonable prices offered for the land in question.

National-endowment Area.

In accordance with the provisions of section 258 of the Land Act, 1908, I have to report that the total area now credited to the endowment amounts to 8,287,542 acres. The limit of 9,000,000 acres imposed by the Act is therefore in a fair way of being reached shortly.

Improved-farm Settlements.

The settlements coming under the above category—referred to on page 6 of last year's report—are now fairly well established, and have been successful from every point of view. Those in the