

FORFEITURES AND SURRENDERS.

On account of failure to comply with the conditions of their leases, the holdings of three lessees were forfeited, and the surrenders of a similar number were accepted.

TRANSFERS.

One hundred and seventy-eight transfers were approved by the Land Board during the year, and eleven rejected. In dealing with this important branch of its functions, the Land Board has been careful to prevent, as far as is possible, speculation in Crown lands.

EXPENDITURE OF "THIRDS," "FOURTHS," AND "HALVES."

Pursuant to the provisions of the Land Act, payment of "thirds," "fourths," and "halves" was made during the year to the undermentioned local authorities, after careful consideration of the proposals for expenditure submitted: Porangahau Road Board, £31 15s.; Patutahi Road Board, £1 7s. 4d.; Waimata Road Board, £99 12s. 3d.; Cook County, £448 10s. 9d.; Dannevirke County, £1,712 5s. 7d.; Hawke's Bay County, £1,052 11s. 4d.; Opotiki County, £106 8s. 7d.; Waikohu County, £973 15s. 1d.; Woodville County, £34 1s. 2d.; Weber County, £23 11s. 9d.; Wairoa County, £527 0s. 4d.; Waipawa County, £34 4s. 5d.; Waiapu County, £493 15s. 4d.; total, £5,538 18s. 11d.

LAND BOARD.

The Land Board held eighteen ordinary and special meetings, and last December made an inspection of Te Whitiatara Block, near Ormondville, recently acquired from the Natives.

GENERAL REVIEW.

In reviewing the year's transactions and the progress of settlement generally throughout the district, whether undertaken by the Department or by private enterprise, the prominent features are the continuance of steady and solid progress, an unsatisfied demand for land of all descriptions, and a buoyancy of revenue. The erection of butter and cheese factories indicates great prospects as to the future closer land-settlement.

DEPARTMENTAL.

In the Accountant's Branch 620 vouchers, representing a sum of £16,414 0s. 2d., were drawn against the Imprest Account and passed through for pre-audit. The number of statutory applications for land received and considered was 667, of which 139 were rejected. The number of letters, telegrams, and parcels received during the year was 11,637, and the number despatched 18,479.

My acknowledgments are due to the office and field staffs for the valuable assistance which they have rendered to me in all departments of the work.

C. R. POLLEN,
Commissioner of Crown Lands.

TARANAKI.

SETTLEMENT OF CROWN LANDS.

As in the past year, the supply of land for selection has been limited owing to the survey of some of the blocks in hand not being sufficiently advanced to enable the land to be offered during the year. Eleven allotments were offered under optional tenures, all except one being selected, and eleven allotments of national endowment were also offered, six being selected. Three town and two rural sections were sold for cash by public auction. One rural section was offered but passed in, and it will be opened under optional conditions. Thirteen leases of town and rural lands were offered for public tender, seven being taken up.

The gross revenue shows an increase of £7,391 over last year, but this is principally on account of amounts received from education endowments, £6,102.

The Crown lands remaining undisposed of amount to 286,519 acres. It is hoped to have about 45,000 acres on the market next year.

CONDITION AND PROGRESS OF SETTLEMENT.

The weather has been bad for burning bush, and this will handicap the settlers to some extent next year. Generally, improvements on land already disposed of are greatly in excess of the requirements of the Act. The forward condition of the New Plymouth harbour-works and the progress of the Stratford-Te Koura Railway should shortly mean lessened cost of transport to many of the settlers, and if the oil industry justifies present promise the progress of the district should be helped.

The Ranger for the northern portion of the Land District reports:—

"All the settlers in my district, with but few exceptions, are making fair progress, the old story—want of road-access—being the most serious drawback they have to contend with. This season the weather-conditions have been exactly the reverse of last year, but have had practically the same effect on the stock-markets. The failure of the ordinary bush burns has caused a general depreciation among store and young stock of all classes."