

SCENERY-PRESERVATION.

The work of the Department in connection with scenery-preservation has been satisfactorily carried on during the year, and a total of 274,061 acres has now been set apart under the Scenery Preservation Act, and is now administered by the Department. Further areas of Crown land suitable for scenic preservation, but more or less unfitted for settlement purposes, may be added from time to time to the area proclaimed, thus maintaining the scenic beauty of the Dominion.

Full particulars of operations under the Scenery Preservation Act will be found in paper C.-6.

CONFERENCE OF OFFICERS.

During the year a conference of officers was held for the purpose of inquiring into and reporting on the administration of District Land Offices, also with the view of generally promoting the efficiency of the clerical branch of the Department. It was composed of the following officers: Mr. F. T. O'Neill, Assistant Under-Secretary for Lands, Wellington (chairman); Mr. H. M. Bannister, Chief Clerk, District Office, Wellington; Mr. C. E. Archibald, Chief Clerk, New Plymouth; Mr. F. T. Sandford, Chief Clerk, Hokitika; Mr. A. C. Turnbull, Chief Accountant, Wellington; Mr. J. H. O'Donnell, Receiver of Land Revenue, Auckland; Mr. A. D. Macfarlane, Receiver of Land Revenue, Invercargill; Mr. S. Gambrill, clerk, Head Office, Wellington; Mr. N. Fleming, clerk, District Office, Wellington; Mr. H. Hawthorn, Officer in Charge Pay and Revenue Branches, Treasury Department, Wellington; Mr. P. D. N. Verschaffelt, Sub-Inspector, Public Service Commissioner's Office, Wellington.

The conference opened on the 4th May, 1914, in the Government Buildings, Wellington, and presented its report on the 12th June, 1914.

The following is a short synopsis, together with remarks relative to the recommendations of the conference under the main headings:—

Records and Correspondence.—It was ascertained that the system of recording in District Offices varied, and a recommendation was made for the adoption of the series system of record as indicated in parliamentary paper H.-14, 1913, amended to suit the requirements of Land Offices. The recommendation was approved, and the system as outlined established in the various offices.

Returns.—The recommendations of the conference in respect of returns were with the view of doing away with all unnecessary returns, the preparation of others by carbon process, and the elimination of duplication of work and tables in the annual statements. The recommendations have generally been given effect to, and this year's annual returns are compiled from a set of tables revised in terms of the suggestions of the conference.

Accounts.—The conference recommended the extension of the multiple system of collecting and accounting of land revenue in all District Offices, the adoption of carbon process in connection with all revenue-work, and the revision of all forms, paying special attention to the introduction of compound forms wherever practicable. Recommendations were also made for the alteration and simplification of accounting for revenue received in the Gisborne office; also for the reduction of work in connection with refunds of deposits, &c., refunds being now made by cheque payable to order.

Land Board Work.—The conference reported that it had ascertained that various systems were in force in the different offices regarding the carrying-out of Land Board work, and recommended the introduction of a uniform system. As recommended, a uniform system has been introduced which allows of the preparation of the order paper by two or more officers, and by the use of carbons and the noting of resolutions on the order paper. All unnecessary transcription has been eliminated from Land Board work.

Books, Forms, and Cards.—The conference reviewed all books, forms, and cards in the various offices, and made recommendations as to the adoption of standard sets. In connection with forms, special attention was given to the introduction of compound forms wherever practicable.

Rangers' Duties.—A recommendation was made relative to the introduction of a new system for the carrying-out of Rangers' duties, and such system is in the direction of reducing all Rangers' clerical work to a minimum. The system as outlined by the conference will be introduced as soon as the necessary loose-leaf field-book covers are available.

General.—The conference made several valuable suggestions and recommendations for the better working of Land Offices; and it is generally recognized that the holding of the conference will do much in the way of establishing uniformity of practice in the various offices, and, while simplifying the work of the Department, the efficiency thereof will be maintained, if not placed on a higher standard.