

ARREARS OF OLD SELECTIONS.

The surveys have now been completed of arrears of selections under scheme survey, with the exception of a few sections in Karamea which are now well in hand.

The system of selection before survey does not work well for this district, as it does not provide properly for homestead-sites and for roads, and the non-definition of boundaries tempts selectors to evade proper occupation and working of their sections, thus militating against a true nucleus of settlement and interior community of interest.

LAND ALREADY OFFERED.

The various blocks of Lamb Valley, Station Creek, Howard, and Rotoiti, together with the Lake Settlement, did not, for reasons previously mentioned, attract other than a moderate number of selectors, although admirably suited for ready working. The success of these blocks, however, is only a matter of time, as the high prices for stock realized at the local sales must have the effect of bringing about a demand for further land.

Portions of Wai-iti Hills were also readily disposed of as soon as each block of milling-timber was cut out. The bulk of the land offered during the year has been either on renewable lease or pastoral license under the regulations for mining districts.

LANDS TO BE OFFERED.

During the current year it is proposed to offer areas aggregating 90,000 acres in various parts of the district.

The surveys of some 10,000 acres of good dairying and pastoral land at Karamea are approaching completion.

It is hoped that the improved road access from Westport to this hitherto isolated district, together with more regular sea service, will render more commercially workable the undoubtedly splendid land in that locality.

An engineering survey now in progress will, there is every reason to hope, shortly result in the establishment of a most serviceable route for interchange of stock between Karamea and the railway system at Tadmor, thus utilizing the different climatic conditions of the two coasts.

Although the steady and persistent opening-up of these back-country roads and stock-routes in the numerous localities served will for a time tax the resources both of the General and the local Government, yet the venture is a thoroughly sound one now that farming and market transport are rapidly proceeding on scientific lines.

CROWN TENANTS.

The number of Crown tenants on the books is 2,607, practically the same as last year; the new tenants about balance those who have exercised their right of purchase.

FRUIT INDUSTRY.

The fruit industry, which is now an assured success, with sound commercial connections, continues to increase. Four canning-factories are kept busy, and the trade with the outside world is extending.

EDUCATION ENDOWMENT LANDS.

There is nothing specially worthy of mention under this heading, but the tenants in all cases are showing a strong disposition to come under the new Act in order to obtain more equitable protection for their improvements. The tenure of twenty-one years and the right of renewal at revaluation at the end of the term seem to give every satisfaction.

FOREST-CONSERVATION.

Various areas are being set aside from time to time as the land suitable for settlement becomes occupied.

DAIRYING INDUSTRY.

There are now nine butter-factories and two creameries. The value of the industry is about £70,000 per annum, and the number of cows in the district in connection with factories is eight thousand. The general tendency of the industry is in the direction of concentration and good steady progress.

CORRESPONDENCE AND RECORDS.

The volume of correspondence shows an increase all round, and the improved system of records enables it to be dealt with with facility and despatch.

LAND BOARD AND OFFICE CHANGES.

The usual monthly meetings were held at Nelson, and in addition there were three special meetings at Westport, Reefton, and Murchison. The Land Board also paid several visits of inspection to the outlying districts, an arrangement which appeared to give the settlers considerable satisfaction.

During the year the Department lost the services of Mr. Andrew Sinclair, whose experience and judgment rendered him a most valuable member of the Board.

SPECIAL DISTRICTS FOR ROADING.

There has so far been no applications under this head, but it is possible there may be one or two localities that may deem it desirable to take advantage of this section of the Act.