

COAL INDUSTRY.

There is a fair improvement upon last year's output, which was seriously affected by the strike.

INSPECTIONS BY CROWN LANDS RANGERS.

The three Rangers in their respective districts have kept their inspections up to date. These show that the settlers' improvements are in most cases well in advance of the statutory requirements. The number of defaulters, considering the stress of times, is not unreasonably large.

GENERAL.

Successful agricultural and pastoral shows in the more westerly districts, which until recently have been considered almost solely mining centres, are evidence of the progress of settlement from a land point of view, and form encouraging evidence of increasing prosperity. Taken generally, the tenants have every reason to take heart from the year's progress, although in some instances bad burns, due to wet weather, have gone against them. There is every evidence from the Rangers' reports that the improvements effected far outweigh the bare statutory requirements.

I desire to thank both the field and office staff for the zealous discharge of their duties.

MARLBOROUGH.

(H. G. PRICE, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The total area opened for sale or selection during the year was 159,341 acres, of which 148,398 acres were taken up; in this is included four pastoral runs, four land-for-settlements sections, and the balance ordinary Crown lands.

LANDS TO BE OPENED.

There will be an area of about 6,500 acres of Crown lands in the Opouri and Tunakino Valleys opened about July. This is part of a State-forest reserve from which the reservation has been up-lifted, as all the available milling-timber has been removed. Judging by the number of inquiries it will be keenly competed for at the ballot.

RANGERS' INSPECTIONS AND REPORTS.

During the year the Crown Lands Rangers made 539 inspections; the improvements required by the Act being £135,964, and those actually effected £350,228. They report that owing to the exceptionally dry season the settlers have had a bad year, except those in the bush district, where the drought was not felt so much.

REVENUE.

The total revenue received for the past year amounted to £51,482, being an increase of £6,708 over the previous year. The arrears of rent, exclusive of current half-year's rent, is £955.

REBATES OF RENT.

Rebates for prompt payment of rent totalling £2,643 were granted as follows: Ordinary Crown lands—Number, 360; amount, £377. Land for Settlements—Number 359; amount, £2,219. National-endowment land—Number, 79; amount, £47.

CONVERSIONS TO FREEHOLD.

The number of conversions to freehold were—nine for cash, area 4,817 acres, amount £7,458; and on deferred payments four, area 4,277 acres, annual instalments £892.

FLAX INDUSTRY.

The past year has been quite a normal one as regards this industry.

MINING INDUSTRY.

With the exception of the Golden Bar Mine at Wakamarina, from which the returns of gold and scheelite continue satisfactory, there is very little going on in the district.

NOXIOUS WEEDS.

The eradication of noxious weeds is being dealt with as far as funds will allow, but the foxglove and blackberry are both a serious menace in several parts of the district, and as the former is not classified as a noxious weed in the Nelson District, consequently the work done near that boundary in this district is of little avail, as it spreads again from the Nelson District.

LAND BOARD.

The Land Board held twelve ordinary meetings and two special ones. Two tours of inspection were made to different parts of the district.