

Reed, M.P., and the various County Councils north of Auckland, whilst a petition from eleven local bodies praying for the division was presented to the House of Representatives in 1918, the Lands Committee of the House recommending the petition to the favourable consideration of the Government in order that the matter might be proceeded with with all possible expedition. After careful inquiry into the matter it was decided to divide the district as from the 1st April, 1919, the necessary authority to accomplish this having been provided by section 21 of the Land Laws Amendment Act, 1914. As, however, it was found after investigation that further legislative authority was necessary to effect the administrative changes an amendment to the Act was made by section 5 of the Land Laws Amendment Act, 1918, and under the aforesaid provision two Orders in Council were prepared, and published in the *Gazette* of the 30th January, 1919, abolishing the existing Auckland Land District, and constituting in lieu thereof two new land districts to be respectively entitled the "Auckland Land District" and the "North Auckland Land District," and also establishing the principal land offices for the two districts. The line of division between the two districts is the southern boundary of the Franklin County running from the mouth of the Waikato River to Miranda, on the Firth of Thames; all land north of this line, including the Barrier and other islands, is in the new North Auckland Land District.

The division of the district took place as stated, and although much extra work was necessary to enable the new office to cope with its duties and functions from the date of its establishment the staff appointed, assisted by the officers of the Auckland District, worked zealously, and have carried out their duties in a very efficient and satisfactory manner. Owing to the return of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force and the consequent impetus given to settlement, it is anticipated that the Crown lands north of Auckland and the district generally will be settled at a comparatively rapid rate, and to this end the energies of the Department are being devoted, in order that intending settlers may be enabled to select suitable areas at as early a date as possible. The demands of settlement both in this district and the older-established districts are very strenuous, and the survey and clerical staffs of the Department are naturally working at high pressure to cope with the increased work.

The work of the North Auckland staff has been much hampered by the unavoidable delay in providing the necessary office accommodation for it. Even now it will be months before all the rooms allotted are ready for occupation. It is understood that workmen employed making the necessary alterations had to be taken away to do urgent work at the quarantine-station.

LANDS OPENED FOR SELECTION.

The lands opened for selection under the various tenures of the Land Act, Land for Settlements Act, and Education Reserves Act totalled 66,892 acres, including one pastoral run of 52,000 acres. An area of 3,465 acres was opened on the optional system, and on renewable-lease tenure 1,720 acres was offered.

By these figures it will be noticed that during the past year land-settlement by the general public has been practically at a standstill, only very limited areas being available for selection. The explanation lies in the fact that every endeavour has been made to find land for settling discharged soldiers, and with this end in view all suitable areas have been offered under the provisions of the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act, 1915.

It is not proposed in this report to enlarge further on this aspect of the Department's activities, as full particulars are given in the Report on Discharged Soldiers Settlement—parliamentary paper C.—9.

LANDS TO BE OPENED.

As has been the practice during the year just closed, all suitable rural lands to be opened during the ensuing year will be offered for settlement to discharged soldiers only, and in addition this area will be greatly increased by the purchase of private estates for subdivision into smaller holdings.

LANDS SELECTED.

Selections during the year under all headings totalled 802,097 acres by 1,283 selectors. Included in these figures, however, are 127 cash purchases of town, suburban, and rural lands covering an area of 2,224½ acres. These figures include selections made by discharged soldiers.

LANDS MADE FREEHOLD.

The following statement shows the lands purchased for cash :—

	Number.	Area. Acres.	Price. £
Town lands	24	23	1,779
Suburban lands	19	126	1,015
Rural lands	84	2,075	8,526
Totals	127	2,224½	11,320

These figures show a falling-off in cash purchases as compared with last year.

The number and area of leasehold and deferred-payment holdings converted to freehold during the year show a marked increase over similar transactions for last year. This is probably due in some measure to the prosperous year experienced by many landholders, and also to the fact that the right of conversion to freehold of lease-in-perpetuity sections under the Land for Settlements Act expired in November, 1918, and many tenants took the last opportunity to