

8,679 by the 1st April last, on which date there were 7,657 permanent officers, 429 temporary and 593 casual men employed. If an exchange attendant on the permanent staff resigns and is replaced by a girl on temporary employment, as is usually the case, the permanent staff is reduced by one while the temporary staff is increased by one. It is therefore necessary in order to follow the reduction of staff which has been effected during the year, to take into account not only the permanent staff, but also the temporary staff. The same position arises in connection with the maintenance and construction staff.

LAND-SETTLEMENT.

There being little demand by discharged soldiers for rural and pastoral lands, the purchase of land for this purpose has been much reduced.

During the year the Land for Settlements Department acquired 6,000 acres under the provisions of the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act, 1915, at a cost of £140,407, and 2,250 acres for individual soldiers, at £79,750, under section 3 of the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act, 1917.

The total area proclaimed under the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act, 1915, up to the 31st March, 1922, was 1,367,761 acres, of which 46,670 acres were proclaimed during the past year. Fifteen estates, comprising 28,938 acres, subdivided into 145 holdings, were opened for selection, together with 231,398 acres of rural, Crown, and scattered settlement sections comprising 460 holdings. Excluding cash sales, reserves, and miscellaneous leases some 221,558 acres of Crown settlement and national-endowment lands, subdivided into 714 sections, were taken up.

An area of 97,972 acres of land was taken up by 403 discharged soldiers, whilst 1,307 persons other than soldiers selected 212,104 acres. Over 400,000 acres of land are now open for application by the general public, soldiers having preference. In view of the conditions which obtained during the past year this result is satisfactory. I believe that improved prices will be followed by an increased demand for land, the settlement of which is essential to increased production. The Government policy of encouraging and facilitating settlement will be vigorously pursued.

WASTE-LANDS DEVELOPMENT.

Two large blocks have been prepared for settlement under the waste-lands-development system—the Riverhead, containing some 10,000 acres, subdivided into sixty-five sections, and another area between Rotorua and Taupo.

EXTENSION OF SOLDIERS' PRIVILEGES TO SOUTH AFRICAN WAR VETERANS.

Provision was made by section 17 of the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act, 1921–22, to extend certain provisions of the principal Act to South African and other war veterans, and will be given effect to as opportunity offers.

KAURI-GUM INDUSTRY.

The market for kauri-gum has not yet recovered, and, although good prices were obtained, the quantity shipped during the year was below half the annual export average for the decade prior to the war. The return to Europe of some hundreds of Austrians materially affected the output, which, however, increased later, owing to the arrival on the gumfields of many men who found it difficult to obtain employment in the towns.

As buying by private exporters fell off, it became necessary for the Government to provide assistance in all the gum-producing districts, preference being given to married men, and gum was purchased in small lots from those in need.

The total purchases for the year amounted to £38,600, or £5,600 in excess of the previous year, while the sales totalled £21,800, or £16,500 less than those for 1920–21.