

A scheme of consolidation of the interests of the Crown and the non-sellers was therefore arranged. Meetings were held at Ruatoki and elsewhere between representatives of the Lands and Native Departments and the Native owners, and eventually the Crown obtained a composite block capable of being opened up for settlement as soon as the necessary surveys and boundary adjustments have been completed.

The Crown obtained from the Natives under the consolidation scheme land to the value of £20,000 to cover cost of arterial roads, and a further area is to be given to cover survey costs. These arrangements established a principle in connection with purchases of Native lands which no doubt will be followed in all similar cases, and which will expedite the settlement of these lands.

LEGISLATION.

The following is a brief summary of the legislation affecting the operations of this Department which was passed during the last session of Parliament :—

Land Laws Amendment Act, 1921-22.—This Act, which contains twenty-five sections, is subdivided into two parts :—

Part I gives effect to certain recommendations made by the Southern Pastoral Lands Commission, which in 1920 inquired into the conditions with respect to the occupation of pastoral runs in the South Island. The principal provisions are as follow : Section 4 does away with the necessity of classifying pastoral runs into two classes—pastoral and pastoral-agricultural lands—and also with the necessity of appointing special Commissioners to make such classification. Section 5 enables a pastoral lease to be issued for a term not exceeding thirty-five years, instead of twenty-one years as hitherto. Section 6 prescribes the improvements to be effected on pastoral leases. Section 7 authorizes the postponement of payment of rent in special cases for terms not exceeding three years, thus granting to pastoral lessees a concession not hitherto obtainable by them. Section 8 authorizes an extension of a pastoral lease for a period not exceeding seven years in cases where the lessee has suffered substantial loss owing to any general financial stringency. Section 9 provides that the determination by the Minister to subdivide a pastoral run shall be made, where practicable, not later than two years prior to the expiration of the lease. Sections 10, 11, 12, and 13 give facilities for the acquisition, subject to certain conditions, of the fee-simple of pastoral runs in cases where the areas thereof are regarded as not more than sufficient for the maintenance of lessees and their families. Section 14 authorizes the extension for another term not exceeding fourteen years of all pastoral leases having a term of not less than fourteen years, and, subject to the consent of the Minister of Education or other controlling authority, of all leases of education reserves or endowments administered by a Land Board which comprise pastoral land. Section 15 authorizes the renewal of a lease of an education reserve subject to the provisions of Part VI of the Land Act, 1908, with the consent of the Minister of Education, in cases where the reserve is suitable only for pastoral purposes and unsuitable for subdivision.

Part II of the Act is of a general character. Section 17 enables the term of a deferred-payment license to be extended for a further period of five years, and the instalments payable thereunder to be reduced accordingly, so that the position of licensees in a time of stringency can be eased financially. Section 18 authorizes the extension for a further period of five years of all small-grazing-run leases of Crown or settlement land which are due to expire within five years from the 11th February, 1922. Section 20 makes compulsory the prior consent of the Minister to all forfeitures. The remaining sections are what may be termed “ machinery ” measures, embodying improvements in the land laws which have been found necessary in the course of experience.

Discharged Soldiers Settlement Amendment Act, 1921-22.—Sections 2 to 13 of this Act prescribe the procedure to be followed in realizing properties mortgaged under the principal Act which come into the possession of the Crown through foreclosure. Section 14 provides that the consent of the Minister of Lands must be obtained to all conveyances, transfers, &c., of interests mortgaged as above mentioned. Section 15 authorizes the conversion of a deferred-payment license to a renewable lease, thus enabling a discharged soldier to have the benefit of a tenure which will make less of a demand on his immediate financial resources. Section 16 empowers the Minister to postpone for a period not exceeding three years the due date of payment by discharged soldiers of instalments of principal and interest payable under their mortgages. Section 17 empowers the Governor-General, by Proclamation approved in Council, to declare that on and after such date as may be therein specified such benefits of the principal Act as may be specified therein may be conferred on South African veterans.

Hunter Gift for the Settlement of Discharged Soldiers Act, 1921.—This Act makes the necessary provision for the administration of the moneys derived from the sale or lease of the block of land conveyed as a gift to the Crown by Sir George Hunter for the settlement of discharged soldiers.

Public Reserves and Domains Amendment Act, 1921-22.—Section 2 authorizes the Governor-General to increase from ten to fifteen the number of days on which the public can be charged for admission to public reserves. Section 3 empowers Domain Boards to authorize charges for admission by the public to recreation reserves and domains on ten days in any one year, and empowers the Governor-General to increase the number of such days from ten to fifteen in special cases. Section 4 gives power by which portions of domains can be set apart as sites for public halls, and gives facilities for the erection of public halls on domains, and the making of charges for admission thereto, &c. Sections 5, 6, and 7 have been enacted for the purpose of enabling trustees of racecourse reserves to control more effectively the admission of undesirable persons to racecourses.

Urewera Lands Act, 1921-22.—This measure has been enacted for the purpose of giving effect to certain arrangements entered into between the Crown and the Native owners of lands, comprising