

*Freezing Operations.*—In regard to freezing operations, I find that the Southdown Works, near Auckland, treated, for the year, 29,737 sheep, 51,104 lambs, 6,061 cattle, and 2,094 calves; while the works at Moerewa, near Kawakawa, which commenced operations in December, 1921, handled, for the four months, 28,948 sheep, 30,322 lambs, and 1,892 cattle.

*General.* There are five Crown Lands Rangers employed in this district, and their time during the past year has been fully occupied in inspections, valuations of land, stock, and improvements, under the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act. The ordinary inspections of selections under the Land Act have had to stand aside and take second place. Opportunity has been taken, however, of making as many inspections as could be fitted in with the visits to soldiers' farms, special reports being made as necessity called for them.

*Land Board Work.*—During the year the Land Board held thirteen ordinary meetings and three special meetings, occupying in all forty-one days. The total number of items on the order-papers amounted to 3,648, of which 1,023 were in connection with Crown lands business and the balance, 2,625, related to soldier-settlement business.

*Freeholds.*—The Crown land made freehold during the year was ninety sections, containing 8,789 acres, the price being £5,867.

*Revenue and Arrears.*—The total revenue for the year under all headings was £59,583, which is much below last year's figures, owing mainly to the falling-off in timber-sales. The total number of selectors in arrear was 310, involving a sum of £9,192. Of this amount £6,560 is owing by discharged soldiers. This position is in most cases due to the slump in stock and farm-products; the arrears being further increased by postponements previously granted having fallen due and not having been paid, necessitating their being again brought to charge.

*Lands opened for Selection.*—The total area open for selection during the year was 6,214 acres, consisting of isolated areas in various parts of the district. Until the year was well advanced all applications were confined to returned soldiers: this greatly restricted the number of applications. In addition to the area selected there is an area of nearly 70,000 acres which has been surveyed and prepared for settlement, but which cannot be thrown open for the various reasons stated below.

*Land remaining for Future Selection.*—The principal areas for future selection include: Mangonui County—Waitahi and Wainui Blocks, 8,880 acres; Whangaroa County—Omaunu Block, 1,500 acres; Bay of Islands County—Tokowhero and Punakitere Blocks, and Omapere Gum Reserve, 10,272 acres; Whangarei County—Te Mata, Poroti, and Waipu Gum Reserves, and Wharekohe Block, 10,046 acres; Hobson County—Kai-iwi Gum Reserve, and Tutamoe and Pekapekarau Blocks, 19,750 acres; Otamatea County—Mareretu Block, and sections in Kaiwaka and Mangawai Parishes, 7,000 acres; Franklin County—Koheroa Block, 1,800 acres; Waitemata County—Waioneke Block, and sections in Paremoremo Parish, Riverhead Homestead Block, 17,300 acres.

Koheroa Block, containing 2,200 acres, is situated about ten miles from Pokeno Station, forty miles south of Auckland on the Main Trunk line. The route of the proposed Pokeno—Paeroa Railway passes through about the centre of the block. The block consists of easy, undulating country, with a small area of swamp. The land is of fair quality. The block has been subdivided into eight sections, ranging in area from 166 acres to 451 acres. The average price per acre is £3. The block being so easily accessible and convenient to good markets, settlers should have a good prospect of success.

Pekapekarau Block: A portion of this block, containing 2,750 acres, will be available for selection early next year. Pekapekarau, which is situated near Kirikopuni, in the Northern Wairoa district, a few miles from Dargaville, was a forest reserve, and it has not been found possible to open the land for settlement at an earlier date. The area soon to be disposed of has been cut up into eight sections, each of which will make a first-class farm. Most of the land is in grass, and settlers will be able to get an early return from it. The land is of excellent quality. It should carry one and half sheep to the acre and do them well. There has been a keen demand locally for several years for the opening of this block, and the sections will be eagerly sought after by the young men of the district. Several of the sections are suitable for dairy-farming. The land is at an altitude of from 300 ft. to 1,400 ft. above sea-level. A considerable area at the back of the block is being permanently reserved for climatic purposes.

In addition to Pekapekarau and Koheroa Blocks, several large areas have been surveyed, and preparations made for throwing the land open for selection. Five different areas, totalling nearly 40,000 acres, have been subdivided for offering under the homestead conditions of the Land Act. All these areas are held up at the present time on account of the financial stringency, funds not being available for making the necessary advances to the selectors prescribed by the Act.

In other cases several blocks have been subdivided and are ready for opening, but are being held up in consequence of the necessary roads not having been made. Among the blocks so affected are Ahipara, 7,680 acres; Omaunu, 2,200 acres; Tokawhero, 2,033 acres; Te Mata, 2,420 acres; Waioneke 2,440 acres; and Waipu, 2,345 acres.

*Settlement of Gum Lands.*—It is pleasing to report that there is now a strong disposition on the part of the gum-diggers to make permanent homes for themselves on the gumfields. During the past year there has been a marked increase in the number of gum-diggers and other residents on the gumfields who have availed themselves of the liberal provisions offered under section 20 of the Land Act, 1912, and the amending Act of 1919. Briefly, these provisions are as follows: That a landless applicant can select up to 200 acres of these lands on very easy terms, with the option of buying the freehold, no payment other than the lease or license fee being required for the first five years.

These northern gumfields, particularly in all the country lying north of Kaitia, are well adapted for poultry-farming, and in certain localities fruit-farming could be combined. An industrious man can always supplement his income by gum-digging, and any man with a little capital has a good