

HEAD OFFICE.

As in preceding years, the correspondence was very heavy, and taxed the resources of the record staff to the utmost. Inquiries are continually received from all over the Dominion and from abroad not only as regards land available for selection and likely to be made available in the near future, but also as regards lands supposed to have been granted, allotted, or purchased in bygone days, and old records of Native and military claims and awards, and ancient titles require to be searched, and the subject-matter of the inquiry carefully investigated. The ordinary routine work of preparation of returns and statistics, Proclamations, Orders in Council, warrants, sale notices, regulations, appointments to numerous Boards, &c., necessitates much care and attention. Dealings with roads, exchanges of lands, reserves, domains, cemeteries, provisional State forests, kauri-gum reservations, scenic areas, Native grants, titles, and similar matters are steadily on the increase. There has been a heavy and continuous volume of correspondence on all matters dealt with by the Department, and the typing staff was fully occupied.

As will be seen by an earlier paragraph, much legislation required drafting, and most careful revision and explanation to enable it to be submitted to the Law Draftsman, and it may be mentioned that the Department has a very great amount of legislation to initiate owing to the numerous and complex problems that have continuously to be faced when dealing with the lands of the Dominion.

The work of the Sales Branch, as usual, included the publication of a large number of sale posters of lands open for selection, and also of the usual issues of the Crown Lands Guides, monthly posters of lands available for selection, &c., and the distribution thereof. With a view to economy, the printing of sale plans was restricted as much as possible; in many cases the insertion of advertisements in the *Gazette* being adopted in lieu of issuing the customary plans, and thus greatly reducing the cost of the necessary advertising. The reprinting and revision of departmental forms as required was also attended to. Owing to the large number of standard forms now in use, this involved considerable work.

The work of the Accountancy Branch has been for some few years past of a very heavy and onerous nature, principally owing to the volume of work arising out of operations under the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act, the various drainage-works, roading Crown and settlement lands, as well as other financial matters. Administrative matters connected with recommendations for loans, relief, assistance, and expenditure of moneys controlled by this Department, as well as the realization of securities, pass through this branch.

It is obvious that all administrative as well as accounting matters connected with finance, particularly during the past three years, afford means for considerable study of the factors contributing to the success or otherwise of the Department's ventures.

The total paid out by the Department by loans and expenditure is less than during the past few years, the decrease being attributed almost entirely to the transactions under the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act; but, in regard to the latter, the administrative responsibility is now much more onerous than during the period preceding the slump. The statement of expenditure indicates the departmental accounts dealt with.

Taken as a whole, the work of the Head Office has continued on a high plane, and thanks to the unremitting energy and acumen displayed by the district offices which deal primarily with most of the matters coming before the Head Office, the work of the Department is being carried out on sound and progressive lines.

REPORTS ON COGNATE SUBJECTS.

As in former years, separate reports are required to be laid before Parliament in connection with many of the operations carried out by the Department. They comprise—

Surveys.—The report by the Surveyor-General on the work of the survey (or technical) branch of the Department is submitted in parliamentary paper C.-1A.

Swamp-drainage.—The report required by the Swamp Drainage Act, 1915, is contained in parliamentary paper C.-4.

Discharged Soldiers Settlement.—The annual report under the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act, 1915, is furnished by the Department in parliamentary paper C.-9.

Scenery-preservation.—The statutory report containing details of reservations and statement of accounts appears in parliamentary paper C.-6.

Advances for Roading of Crown Lands.—The necessary report submitted in accordance with section 63 of the Land Laws Amendment Act, 1913, appears in parliamentary paper C.-7.

Draining Operations in Hauraki Plains.—A report by the Chief Drainage Engineer on this subject appears in parliamentary paper C.-8.

Public Domains.—A brief summary of the year's operations is given in parliamentary paper C.-10.

Rangitaiki Land Drainage.—The annual report on the operations in the Rangitaiki Plains is given in parliamentary paper C.-11.

Kauri-gum Industry.—The annual report of the Kauri-gum Superintendent on the year's operations is given in parliamentary paper C.-12.

National Endowments.—The annual report required by section 11 of the Land Laws Amendment Act, 1920, appears in parliamentary paper C.-14.