

the latter of the Native interests. The deferred-payment system is principally in favour for this purpose. Applications by a large number of lessees in the Native township of Otorohanga to be granted similar facilities were received just before the close of the year.

The holders of mining titles (residence and business sites) in Te Aroha are availing themselves fairly freely of the right of purchase; but very few applications are being received from Rotorua.

*Revenue.*—The total revenue received for the year was £301,549, including £135,080 under the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Acts. This shows an increase of about £30,000 on the figures for the previous year. The total number of tenants on the books of the district is now 5,426, occupying an area of 1,148,046 acres and paying a rental of £120,515 per annum. A large number of tenants have been added to the books by the purchase operations in Native townships above referred to. The arrears of rent at the close of the year amounted to £69,770, owing by 1,283 lessees. A very substantial portion of this amount is owing by discharged soldier tenants, who have not been pressed pending the findings of the Revaluation Board. The position of other tenants who are in arrear is known to be due in the majority of cases to the effects of the slump and to *bona fide* inability to pay.

*Land Board Work.*—Meetings of the Land Board have been held on twenty-seven days during the year, the total number of items dealt with being 2,092. Although the volume of business shows a decrease from the high-water mark of the soldier-settlement years, it is still very considerable, and many of the cases demanding the attention of the Board are of extreme difficulty, involving very careful consideration. I have found the experience and local knowledge possessed by the members of the Board of great assistance to me since I took charge of this district.

*Lands to be opened for Selection.*—For the reasons already indicated it is difficult to forecast what areas it will be found possible to place on the market during the coming year. Apart from the first offering of the Urewera lands, there is a considerable amount of work yet to be done to determine what further areas in that locality can be made available for settlement without creating danger of damage to the country by erosion, &c., that would far outweigh the value of the land that might be brought into profitable occupation. There is a considerable area of country between the Waikato River and the Hauraki Plains yet to be offered, but this is generally of inferior quality, and will require roading before it can be opened. In the country extending eastwards from the line of the Main Trunk Railway towards Taupo there are large areas under exploration to obtain the necessary topographical information for roading and subdivision, work which must occupy some time before effective proposals for settlement can be framed. The pumice areas of the Rotorua-Taupo district require the provision of adequate means of access before they can be successfully settled, especially in view of the prime necessity for landing fertilizers on the land at a reasonable price, without which successful occupation cannot be anticipated. From the above it will be seen that the settlement of most of the remaining areas in this district depends upon the provision of sufficient access, and a reasonable prospect of assured finance to the settlers who are to undertake the task of breaking in these new lands.

*Office-work.*—The year has been one of very steady activity in the office, a large volume of work having been dealt with. The staff has done its work conscientiously and well.

## GISBORNE.

(V. I. BLAKE, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

*Inauguration of New District.*—At the beginning of the year the new Gisborne Land District, long desired by the people of the district, came into being. The initial meeting of the new Land Board gave a clear indication of the local interest taken in the creation of the district, and was most encouraging to the staff of the new office. All the public interests in Gisborne were represented at a welcome tendered to the new Board. After such a happy start the work has proceeded smoothly, and has grown very much greater. For example, the Board work at the last meeting of the year was three times as heavy as that dealt with at the initial meeting. Although the Board has had to take decisive steps in many cases where settlers were badly in arrear with rent, &c., it is safe to say that as a whole the settlers appreciate the establishment of the new district. The work of the district has been smoothly and expeditiously carried on, thanks very largely to the efforts of the capable office staff created on the inauguration of the new office. The gradual improvement of the arterial roads is making Gisborne more and more a centre for a large district, and in time to come no doubt the boundaries of the land district will have to be extended. Most of the Urewera country, for instance, with the advent of direct road connection, will have its outlet in Gisborne. The utter lack of even ordinary harbour facilities has been and is keeping Gisborne back; but a move is at last being made in the direction of providing a proper harbour. The saving to wool-growers alone would be enormous if wool could be sold and shipped at Gisborne instead of having to be shipped to Napier for sale. The delay in completion of the compilation of the new deeds registers of that part of the Auckland Registration District included in the new land district has caused some inconvenience, but this will no doubt soon be straightened out.

*General Conditions of Settlement.*—The year has been one of markedly improved conditions as far as sheep-farmers are concerned. Prices for wool have exceeded all expectations, being considerably more than double those of last year. This is pleasant to record, as sheep-farmers, who predominate in this district, have had a hard time for the past two or three years. The wool-prices, of course, have had their effect on the market prices of sheep. Large yardings have been the rule, and the prices for pedigree sheep in particular have been very good. Bush farmers had a favourable