

The provisions of section 216 of the Land Act, 1924, dealing with the revaluation of rural Crown lands have been extended to cover rural Crown lands or settlement lands held under deferred-payment licenses. In the event of a reduction in price being determined, provision has been made for a consequent decrease in the instalments of purchase-money and interest payable.

Another section authorizes revaluations in special cases notwithstanding existing restrictions. There is established a Board which is empowered to apply the machinery with respect to the revaluation of holdings to any Crown tenant even if he may have been in occupation of his land for less than three years or more than six years, provided the Board is satisfied that good grounds exist for revaluation. In these special cases the new value is to be determined by agreement between the District Revaluation Committee concerned in the case and the central Board. In the event of failure to agree, the value is to be determined by the central Board. Other sections of the Amendment Act deal with the making of provision for the cost of opening up Crown and other land for settlement, the appointment of umpires in arbitration proceedings, and with various miscellaneous matters.

Land for Settlements Amendment Act, 1927.—The Land for Settlements Act, 1925, provides for the acquisition for settlement purposes of private freehold land only, but under the new amendment Crown lands held under lease or license may be resumed for disposal. It is expected that this provision will facilitate the acquisition of lands in cases where it is expedient that leasehold as well as freehold areas should be taken over by the State for closer settlement. The amending Act also provides for remission of rent being granted to lessees of settlement land in cases of hardship, and contains special provisions for the purpose of facilitating the occupation of settlement lands that are not immediately productive.

Education Reserves Amendment Act, 1927.—This Act contains a provision whereby the lessees of rural education reserves administered by a Land Board may surrender their existing leases and obtain new leases in lieu thereof. Any new lease so obtained will be for a term of twenty-one years, with perpetual right of renewal for further terms of twenty-one years, at a rental equal to 5 per cent. of the capital value of the land comprised in the lease reduced by an amount equal to the amount as determined by the Land Board, which the lessee would be entitled in accordance with the terms of his lease to receive from an incoming lessee in respect of the value of improvements as at the date of surrender.

Egmont National Park Amendment Act, 1927.—This Act provides for an alteration in the constitution of the local committees the appointment of which is provided for in the principal Act, and also authorizes the New Plymouth Borough Council on behalf of the Park Board to raise moneys for road-improvements within the park, the Council to be reimbursed by the Board out of its revenues.

The Hutt Valley Lands Settlement Amendment Act, 1927.—Contains certain machinery provisions that have been found necessary to facilitate the working of the principal Act, with respect specially to workers' dwellings on the settlement.

The Kauri-gum Industry Amendment Act, 1927.—Makes provision for the issue and renewal of gum-brokers' and gum-buyers' licenses, and provides that in future no person shall be qualified to hold both licenses.

The Peel Forest Amendment Act, 1927.—Extends the provisions of the principal Act to enable certain local authorities in Canterbury to contribute to the funds of the Peel Forest Board.

The Tongariro National Park Amendment Act, 1927.—This Act provides machinery for the alteration of the boundaries of the park where necessary and desirable, and confers on the Park Board certain additional powers for the making of by-laws.

The Reserves and other Lands Disposal Act, 1927.—Contains thirty-six clauses dealing with Crown lands, reserves, &c.

LANDS FOR SELECTION.

During the year 460,591 acres were selected under all tenures, the number of selections being 1,913, and the average size of holdings approximately 240 acres. There was a very fair demand for improved farms, and keen inquiry for good clean sheep-country, of which there is unfortunately but little offering at the present time. About 190,000 acres of Crown, settlement, and endowment lands were opened for selection, mostly comprising forfeited sections reoffered for disposal. No specially noteworthy blocks of land were subdivided and settled; but the disposal was completed of vacant areas in the Clifton Settlement, Otago, where three farms were offered for sale by public auction. These farms met with a ready demand, and were all purchased on deferred payments at prices in excess of the upsets fixed.

A large area of Crown lands is at all times available for selection, but much of the land is second-class, and it is recommended that intending applicants should gain sufficient local experience before attempting to bring in either totally unimproved country or lands only partially improved. The undeveloped blocks of land remaining in the hands of the Crown for future disposal are limited in extent and, as a rule, somewhat unattractive in quality.

A great many intending applicants for land have very little capital available, whilst some have none at all. It is an extremely difficult matter to place such applicants satisfactorily, as it is becoming more and more clearly recognized that a considerable amount of capital is required to successfully engage in the business of farming, and also that, following economic changes resulting from the war, the capital which would have been sufficient to establish men under pre-war conditions must now be greatly increased. It is possible for the State to do a good deal in assisting those who have a small amount of capital at their disposal, but the man entirely without funds is naturally severely handicapped in his endeavours to settle on the land, and it is not possible to entirely remove his difficulties in that connection.

The offering of inferior lands for selection under the provisions of section 223 of the Land Act is dealt with under a separate heading.

EDUCATIONAL ENDOWMENT.

An area of approximately 819,000 acres of educational endowments under the administration of the various Land Boards is leased to some 4,029 tenants, who pay a total annual rental of £130,314. The endowment comprises large areas of rural farming-lands, and also a considerable number of urban sections of great prospective value. So far as the rural lands are concerned, some dissatisfaction has existed in the past on account of various tenants experiencing difficulty in raising finance owing to