

Auckland, and Gisborne Land Districts have completed their tasks, and their reports have practically all been dealt with. Wherever possible, the recommendations of the Committees are being given effect to, and the results of this policy have been distinctly encouraging.

In all districts affected some 1,874 applications were received under the Act. Up to the 31st March the reports to hand from the Revaluation Committees totalled 1,585, while 1,359 cases have been finally dealt with. In 965 cases reductions amounting to £364,861 have been made in capital values, and reductions totalling £17,917 were effected in annual rental and interest payable. Advances totalling £22,175 have been authorized in suitable cases, and very liberal concessions granted by way of remissions of rent on condition that equivalent improvements are effected on the holding concerned. A good deal has also been done in the way of reducing mortgages, and, generally speaking, wherever possible the recommendations of the various Committees have been given effect to. In some cases, of course, difficulty has been experienced on account of private mortgages. It was never intended that loans should be made under the Act merely to strengthen the position of mortgagees, and consequently it has been required that advances be secured as a first charge on the land or on the settler's equity therein. In some special cases exceptions may be made to this provision, but only where the valuation shows that the Crown will have reasonably good security.

The State Advances and other loans on deteriorated properties have presented some difficulty. The question whether the State lending Departments should be empowered to write down their charges in accordance with present-day valuations has been carefully considered. It is contended that no Department charged with the responsibility of administering public funds should be vested with such power, and that any readjustments necessary should be carried out by way of realization, or, in the case of Crown tenants, by the process of forfeiture and reselection. Arrangements have accordingly been made with the State Advances Office whereby Crown lessees may make application for the forfeiture of their leases with a view to the holdings being reallocated or reoffered subject to loans in keeping with present-day values. Action on these lines is, of course, taken only with the concurrence of the State Advances Department, which in suitable cases is prepared to give its consent and agree to the amount of loading in its favour. In the case of properties held by discharged soldiers the sections affected can be reallocated under the provisions of the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act, and civilian sections of 640 acres or less may be reallocated as special cases under section 146 of the Land Act, 1924. Where, however, civilian sections exceed 640 acres it will be necessary, after forfeiture, to advertise them as open for application loaded with the readjusted charges, and the former lessee must take the chance of there being competition for the land. Action on the above lines has been taken in a number of cases. The arrangements made between the two Departments are working most satisfactorily.

SPECIAL SETTLEMENT OF INTERIOR LANDS.

The setting-apart of blocks of pumice, gum, and other inferior lands under the provisions of section 223 of the Land Act, 1924, as amended by section 11 of the Land Laws Amendment Act, 1926, has received careful attention, and two blocks in the Auckland District were offered during the year. A good many applications were received, although the applicants were not in all cases considered to be altogether suitable. However, seven of the seventeen sections offered were allotted at the ballot, while two further areas were later taken up, and in view of the experimental nature of the scheme this result may be considered as fairly satisfactory. A portion of the Riverhead Block, in the Waitemata County, was also made available on the special conditions laid down for the settlement of these inferior lands, five of the eight sections offered being taken up at the ballot, while the remaining areas have since been selected.

The following summary of the lands dealt with for the year is furnished in accordance with the provisions of section 223 (14) of the Land Act, 1924:—

- (a) Aggregate area of land set apart: 10,747 acres.
- (b) Number of allotments and aggregate area disposed of: 16 allotments, 3,571 acres.

LANDS RESERVED FOR VARIOUS PURPOSES.

Under the provisions of section 360 of the Land Act, 1924, and section 71 of the Land for Settlements Act, 1925, various areas of Crown and settlement land were permanently reserved, during the year. The reservations made totalled seventy-two, covering an area of 23,169 acres. A summary of work carried out under this heading is given below.

Purpose of Reserve.	Number of Reservations made.	Area.		
		A.	B.	P.
Agricultural and pastoral association reserve ..	1	0	3	0
Cable station	1	20	0	0
Cemetery	4	2	3	37
Education endowments	4	2,034	1	5
Government purposes	1	0	2	0
Gravel and quarry	6	26	0	9
Hatchery	1	10	0	0
Hospital-site	1	4	1	29
Municipal	1	5	0	7
Native flora and fauna	1	40	0	0
Public-hall-site	1	0	1	0
Recreation	29	20,767	2	23
River-protection	1	127	0	9
Roadmen's cottage sites	7	17	3	6
School-sites	9	16	0	12
Travelling-stock	3	35	2	23
Water-conservation	1	60	2	35
Totals	72	23,169	0	35

The above does not include areas that have been vested in the Crown as public reserves in town subdivisions pursuant to the provisions of section 16 of the Land Act, 1924.