

POSTPONEMENTS.

Postponements of payment of rent were granted to 140 tenants during the year, involving the sum of £13,823. At the 31st March, £125,406 remained postponed on account of 919 tenants, as against £147,592 on account of 1,099 tenants at the 31st March, 1928.

ARREARS.

Rents in arrear at the 31st March amounted to £156,209, a decrease of £41,710 on last year's figures.

The following shows the position in regard to arrears of rent for the past five years :—

Year ending 31st March,	1925	..	..	£	301,659
"	1926	..	..	..	222,148
"	1927	..	..	..	227,191
"	1928	..	..	..	197,919
"	1929	..	..	..	156,209

REBATES.

For prompt payment of rent 19,966 Crown tenants were granted the usual rebate in terms of section 123 of the Land Act, 1924, and section 59 of the Land for Settlements Act, 1925. These rebates amounted to a total of £56,989.

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT.

Of the area in the national endowment, 6,680,587 acres were held under lease or license at the 31st March by 4,484 tenants, paying an annual rental of £136,916, while a very large area (partly, however, covered by existing leases) had been set aside as provisional State forests. For further particulars *re* the national endowment see parliamentary paper C.-14.

LAND-DRAINAGE OPERATIONS.

During the year ended 31st March last some 1,491,056 cubic yards of spoil were excavated by floating and dry-land excavators. In addition, 10,600 yards of rock and 231,352 yards of stiff clay and rubble were dealt with. Further particulars of the various activities of this branch of the Department are given in Appendix III.

DETERIORATED LANDS.

The work of the various committees set up under the provisions of the Deteriorated Lands Act, 1925, has practically been completed. The total number of applications for relief received from settlers in the various districts was 1,864, of which 1,823 had been dealt with at the 31st March last. In 1,455 cases reductions amounting to £503,843 have been made in capital values, involving a reduction of £23,739 in annual rents and interest payable. Mortgages have been reduced by some £51,262, some sixty cases having been dealt with under this heading. Advances totalling £24,335 have been authorized in suitable cases for the purchase of fencing-materials, lime, and manures, while remissions of rent have been granted on a liberal basis on conditions providing that an equivalent amount is expended on improvements. The recommendations of the various committees have been given effect to wherever possible, and the assistance granted in terms of the Act has proved of great benefit in enabling the settlers concerned to make good progress with the task of bringing their holdings back into full production.

SPECIAL SETTLEMENT OF INFERIOR LANDS.

The following summary of the lands dealt with during 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 : 1,862 acres.

(b) Number of allotments and aggregate area disposed of : 4 allotments, 1,338 acres.

The total number of allotments taken up and the area held as at the 31st March, 1929, was : 19 allotments, 4,908 acres.

The area set apart during the year comprised portion of the Poroti Block, situated about thirteen miles from Whangarei, and comprising mostly undulating and easy sloping country, the bulk of which is ploughable ; soil chiefly pipeclay on sandstone formation. The block was subdivided into eleven sections, ranging from 129 to 198 acres, of which three sections were selected.

On the Riverhead Block, near Kaukapakapa, which was offered during the latter part of 1927, seven sections have been taken up, and the settlers have made satisfactory progress in developing the land. All the holdings have been partly cleared and ploughed, and two settlers have laid down a portion of their sections in grass. The greater part of the land is being allowed to remain fallow for the time being, and at present the settlers are directing their energies to fencing, &c.

A considerable amount of improvements has also been carried out on the sections held in the Ngongotaha Homestead Settlement, between Rotorua and Atiamuri.