

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 fifty-five, covering an area of 2,550 acres. A summary of work carried out under this heading is given below:—

Purpose of Reserve.	Number of Reservations made.	Area.		
		A.	R.	P.
Additions to school-sites	3	2	1	12
Addition to hot-springs reserve	1	1	2	0
Cemetery	2	1	1	16
Government purposes	1	0	3	13
Gravel and quarry	4	9	1	25
Harbour	1	17	2	0
Hospital-sites	2	7	1	8
Landing	1	2	0	0
Library-site	1	1	0	0
Military	1	1	3	14
Municipal	4	2	2	27
Public-hall site	1	0	1	24
Recreation	15	41	0	5
River-protection	1	12	2	0
Rubbish and sanitary	1	10	2	9
School-sites	7	20	1	26
Travelling stock	1	16	1	13
Water-supply	8	2,401	2	39
Totals	55	2,550	2	31

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.

CONFERENCE.

A conference of executive officers of the Department, presided over by the Hon. G. W. Forbes, Minister of Lands, was held in Wellington in January. The position in regard to abandoned farms was fully gone into with a view to so adjusting their values that they will prove attractive propositions to persons desiring to select farming-lands, while the possibility of developing the pumice lands and other undeveloped areas in various parts of the Dominion received careful consideration. Reports were also submitted of lands considered suitable for settlement, and the whole question of land-settlement was thoroughly discussed from all points of view. The conference resulted in several important recommendations, which, if adopted, will involve the introduction of legislation to bring them into effect, being submitted for the consideration of the Government.

SETTLEMENT OF UNDEVELOPED AREAS.

Following upon the conference referred to above, the Hon. the Minister requested the various Commissioners of Crown Lands to select areas of undeveloped Crown lands suitable for subdivision in their districts, and to carry out the necessary surveys so that settlement can be proceeded with if Parliament approves of the provision of the necessary finance. At the present time the Department has no express authority to expend funds in preparing Crown lands for occupation, or in making advances to settlers for the improvements required in the initial stages of breaking in their holdings, and it is desired to improve the position in that respect.

It is considered that there are in some districts large areas of unimproved land, mostly pumice and gum country, which could be profitably occupied now that the value of top-dressing for that class of land is becoming more fully understood. Most of it is land requiring fairly close settlement, so as to allow of intensive farming of every section, and it is hoped that as a result of special investigations several blocks suitable for group settlement will be found. A topographical survey of a block in the Taupo-Rotorua district is being undertaken by the Department. When the survey has been completed the area will be developed for settlement to a certain extent before being opened for selection, and it is hoped to proceed on similar lines with blocks in other parts of the Dominion. This will enable the incoming tenant to obtain some return from his land from the beginning, and he will then be in a better position to proceed with the improvement of the remainder of his section. The land concerned is at present in fern and scrub, and a good deal is ploughable country. The success of the scheme will also largely depend upon suitable finance being provided to assist the settlers in their farming operations.