

POSTAL AND POLICE AUTHORITIES.

The Department has been greatly indebted to both the Postal and Police Departments for their great assistance in connection with the collecting of boiler and machinery fees during the year, and for bringing defaulters into line. Only for this prompt action numerous fees would now be overdue. The police have also greatly assisted in the Court cases connected with owners who have been proceeded against for employing non-certificated engine-drivers to drive their machinery, and also in cases where the engine-driver has been prosecuted for driving without having the necessary certificate.

"THE INSPECTION OF MACHINERY ACT AMENDMENT ACT, 1903."

This was only a short amending Act to get over a technical omission in the consolidating Act of 1902; also to make the competency and service engine-drivers' certificates that are issued by the Department of equal value, and to give the Department power to deal with non-certificated engine-drivers of winding, traction, and locomotive engines who should hold certificates, and are taking charge of these engines illegally.

MARINE ENGINEERS' EXAMINATIONS.

These examinations have been held at the Ports of Auckland,* Wellington,* Christchurch,* Dunedin,* Gisborne,* Napier,* Wanganui,* Nelson,* Timaru,* Invercargill,* Picton, Greymouth, Westport, Hokitika, and at Palmerston North, during the year.

Return No. 16 gives the names of the successful candidates, and the various grades in which they passed; also the total number of applicants, the total fees payable, and the number who failed.

As usual, the applicants for examination for third-class engineers' certificates have been more numerous than in any other grade. The first- and second-class applicants have this year fallen off slightly, owing to the new regulations for examination of engineers defining the minimum horse-power of engines of steamers on which a candidate can qualify. The minimum nominal horse-power for first class is ninety-nine, and the minimum nominal horse-power for second-class is sixty-six. More than 50 per cent. of New Zealand steamers have engines of less than ninety-nine nominal horse-power, so that the opportunities for an engineer qualifying for the higher certificate are much reduced.

SURVEY OF SHIPS.

This section of our work is practically up to date throughout the colony, nearly all the steamers having been surveyed during the year. Quite a number of sailing-ships have also been dealt with, and considerable repairs carried out to them.

Considerable attention has been paid by the Surveyors at the different ports to the fitting-up of ships' boats and rafts, so as to carry, without damage, provisions and water. In the case of rafts, the tanks containing water and biscuits have covers on each tank at both ends, so that, whichever side of the raft is uppermost, access can be had to the contents. This should add to the comfort of those who in future may have the misfortune to have to take to the boats or rafts after shipwreck. The usual amount of repairs to steamers has been carried out, and no defect has been discovered during the year attributable to a faulty survey.

These periodical surveys are carried out in a most careful manner, every part of the ship, both inside and out, being examined, including ballast-tanks, bulkheads, boilers, engines and all equipments. In some of the large boats the survey often takes a Surveyor a week, but it is much better to find out a defect in port than to repair damage on the high seas.

SURVEY OF SHIPS FOR SEAWORTHINESS.

This special and responsible work has taken up a good deal of time, especially at the Port of Wellington. The causes of such surveys have been of the usual kind, such as defects in machinery, including main steam-pipes, and grounding with supposed damage to hull-plating. In some cases docking had to be insisted upon, when in the opinion of the Surveyor considerable damage had been done to the hull. Nelson Harbour accounted for several mishaps to steam-vessels, through grounding in the fairway at the narrow entrance to the harbour.

The fees earned by these surveys amount to £80 17s.

GOVERNMENT STEAMERS.

The following Government steamers were surveyed during the year: S.s. "Tutanekai," s.s. "Janie Seddon," s.s. "Gordon," and the auxiliary oil-engine schooner "Countess of Ranfurly."

NEW STEAMERS.

Twenty-nine new steamers and vessels with oil-engines have been added to our books during the year. The names of these vessels are "Young Bungaree," "Enterprise," "Variance," "Rarawa," "Mangapapa," "Tainui," "Whakarire," "Scout," "Rubi Seddon," "Southern Cross," "Aida," "Akitio," "Ongarue," "Tu Atu," "Atapo," "Kawau," "Condor," "Pilot," "Purau," "Tawera," "Rotoiti," "Fire Fly," "Fire Float," "Piako," "Waitohi," "Duke," "Flirt," "Mahinapua," and "Kiwi."

A steel steamer to carry 400 tons is being constructed at the present time in Auckland by one of the engineering firms there, and is probably the largest steel steamer ever built in the colony. On my last visit to Auckland I inspected the work in progress, and found that a faithful and workmanlike piece of work was being turned out, which will, I think, when completed, be a credit to the colony. The machinery for the steamer is being made by a Wellington firm of engineers. It is of the compound type, with cylinders 19 in. and 38 in. diameter with a 24 in. stroke. The steamer is intended for the West Coast trade, and will have a light draught to enable her to work the bar harbours on that coast.

* Places at which more than one examination was held during the year.