

APPENDIX IV.

REPORT OF NEW ZEALAND GOVERNMENT AGENT, MELBOURNE.

THE New Zealand Government Agent, Melbourne (Mr. H. J. Manson), reports as follows:—

I have the honour to herewith submit my annual report for the year ended 31st March, 1913.

The foreboding outlook in the early part of the year had a most disquieting effect upon things generally. The drought-conditions which prevailed proved a serious drawback to the successful carrying-on of trading concerns and pastoral pursuits; this was so much so that it was feared, with a tightening money-market, that Australia was again in for bad times. Fortunately, however, the drought broke and normal conditions were restored, too late though for many intending tourists to complete their arrangements to visit New Zealand. Bright prospects have since continued, and no doubt those who were disappointed this year will carry out their intentions in this respect next season.

The popularizing of Tasmania and summer "seaside camps" in Victoria as tourist resorts have in more or less degree affected the traffic to New Zealand. During the last two or three years I have noticed an increasing exodus of the Melbourne inhabitants to the Island State, and have seen considerable expansion in the "camping-grounds" along the coastal frontages of this city. Holiday-makers with limited annual leave are encouraged to remain within their own borders, and are in consequence more difficult to influence in favour of the longer trip to New Zealand. On the other hand, the shipping companies trading between here and New Zealand report satisfactory returns. They state that their steamers have been well patronized, and that the number of passengers carried shows an increase on last year's figures. This office takes some share in these results, and though our booking returns do not come up to expectations our efforts have, I hope, helped indirectly to fill their ships. The booking figures for 1912-13 were £2,198 10s. 4d., and 1911-12, £3,891 19s. 2d.

The number of callers registered at the Agency for the year was 13,292: of these, 11,854 were local and 1,438 foreign. The figures for last year totalled 16,364, being 13,354 local and 2,010 foreign.

The removal from our Collins Street quarters to less pretentious offices in the Equitable Building, during our busy season, was not conducive to good business, especially in the matter of booking passengers to New Zealand. Naturally our takings and the number of visitors show a falling-off, but I am hopeful that when we go into the Union Steamship Company's new offices a decided all-round improvement will take place. I am sure that by our association with a powerful organization such as this a distinct advantage will be gained. There are ways in which I think we can combine and work together for mutual benefit. For instance, our interests being practically identical, we may be able to enter into an agreement whereby we can jointly advertise and thus secure better terms and results than would be the case if working independently.

It has been gratifying to receive letters from those who have appreciated the booking facilities afforded. Others have called to express their appreciation personally. As time goes on it will be essential to increase the amount allowed this office for advertising, as the States of the Commonwealth are certainly attracting increased numbers to their respective resorts each season by extensive advertising.

As you are aware, the Commonwealth States have been conducting a vigorous immigration policy during the year, and their efforts have made a marked difference in the number of immigrant callers to our offices.

The arrangement whereby we could examine intending immigrants to New Zealand has given general satisfaction. Not only has the lot of the immigrant been made smooth, but many difficulties as far as ourselves and the shipping companies were concerned have been overcome.

The illustrated and descriptive literature relating to the scenic wonders and the general resources of the Dominion sent me during the year has been broadcasted throughout the State of Victoria and, when occasion demanded, in the adjoining States and other countries. In order to get as much publicity as possible a variety of methods were adopted in its distribution. The services of Boyd's Messenger Service, a firm who keep a staff of boys for the purpose, were engaged to deliver publications to the principal homes in the important suburbs of Melbourne, and our own messenger was kept systematically at work supplying the steamers, reading-rooms, hotels, and other institutions. The appropriation made available this year for advertising was made the most of. Half the amount was spent upon an attractive advertisement in two popular theatres; slides of New Zealand scenery were shown covering a period of four months prior to the raising of the curtain and at the interval. The balance was devoted to an attractive and illustrated advertisement in the annual number of the *Australian Dramatic and Musical News* and to advertising our present address in the daily Press. A dozen New Zealand pictures were loaned to the Majestic Theatre when leaving our old quarters, as we had no room for them here. They are nicely displayed in their up-to-date lounge, and will serve a good purpose pending our removal to the new offices.

Everything has been done to draw attention to trout-fishing in New Zealand, and to this end photographs depicting "good catches" have been given to the various angling clubs for display in their rooms. During the year I also sent out photographs to a number of the State schools, to be suitably framed and hung in prominent positions.

I have endeavoured to popularize New Zealand as a good country for motorists, and this year several Melbourne men took their cars over. I was able to procure an excellent advertisement and a "write-up" in a souvenir specially prepared by the Automobile Club of Victoria, which was largely distributed at the Motor Exhibition held in Melbourne early in the year.