

APPENDIX B.

REPORT OF THE OFFICE-ACCOMMODATION BOARD.

Office-accommodation.

Office-accommodation Board, Wellington, 1st May, 1914.

WE have to report that the Office-accommodation Board was set up in September last by the Government for the purpose of making inquiries and reporting from time to time in respect of the accommodation of the departmental buildings in the Dominion.

The Board has made inspections of the departmental buildings at Auckland, Wellington, Blenheim, Nelson, and Christchurch. In each case it was found that considerable improvement could be made in respect of the accommodation, and recommendations in this direction were made to and approved by the Government which it is expected will have a markedly important effect on the efficient administration and supervision of the Service.

In rearranging the present accommodation and in allocating offices in new buildings special attention has been given to the matter of ensuring that divisional officers should, as far as practicable, be in immediate touch with the divisions under their control—a feature largely disregarded in the past.

In addition to inspecting and reporting on the office-accommodation at the places named, the Board has met regularly and dealt with matters in connection with departmental requirements, and has arranged the exchange and better grouping of offices in various parts of the Dominion. Matters which previously had remained unsettled for considerable periods, owing to the different views of Permanent Heads, have now been satisfactorily settled.

Departmental Buildings, Auckland.—An inspection of the accommodation provided in the departmental buildings at Auckland took place in February last. In order to meet the immediate requirements of the Lands and Deeds and Lands and Survey Departments it was necessary to completely rearrange the main building, Customs Street, and also the old Magistrates' Court buildings. The examination of the old Magistrates' Court buildings showed that the protection afforded to the valuable records housed therein was totally inadequate. The whole of the ground floor of the building will be rearranged and adequate protection provided. The Stamps Department has been provided with additional and more commodious quarters on the first floor of the building.

In the main building, Customs Street, the Board took into special account the requirements of the Lands and Survey, Native, Labour, and Old-age Pensions Departments. It was found that the Lands and Survey Department occupied a large number of small rooms on two floors of the building, and that, owing to the location of the offices, supervision and direction by the administrative officers was practically impossible. By rearrangement and an exchange of rooms with other Departments, and by the removal of a number of partitions, these defects will be considerably minimized.

The Old-age Pensions Department was found to be occupying rooms of an unsuitable character, on account of the flight of steps which the old people had to ascend to reach the office. More commodious offices with a direct entrance level with the street have been provided in the Customs Street building.

Improved accommodation was also provided for the Internal Affairs (Electoral branch), Native, Labour, Justice (Official Assignee), and Marine Departments.

Special attention was given to the convenience of officers. In both departmental buildings provision has been made for luncheon-rooms for officers and retiring-rooms for women. The recommendations of the Board also make provision for the installation of an electric lift in the main building.

In Auckland, as in other centres, many of the offices were found to present an untidy appearance, and the Board has recommended that a regular inspection be made of all departmental offices. In Government offices, particularly those to which the public have access, there is every reason why the rooms should be neat and orderly.

Government Buildings, Wellington.—In November last, in view of the urgent necessity for providing better office-accommodation for the Education, Justice, Internal Affairs (Electoral and Messengers staff), and Friendly Societies Departments, the Board made a personal examination of the accommodation provided for the Departments in the Government Buildings in Wellington. As a result extra accommodation has been provided for the several Departments within the buildings, and also for the Friendly Societies Department in the new building of the Bank of New Zealand at Te Aro.

In view of the restricted life of the main Government Buildings, Wellington, the Board will very shortly be called upon to face the task of considering and recommending what steps shall be taken to provide the necessary accommodation not only to replace the present building, but also to provide for Departments at present located in rented premises in the city at a present cost of about £3,000 per annum. In the design of any new building the grouping of the different Departments and the officers engaged therein must be more carefully considered, for if efficient and economical conditions are to prevail in Departments they can only exist where the accommodation and facilities are in harmony.