

The loss ratio was 38·6 per cent. for 1915, and 43·5 per cent. for 1914. The ratio of working-expenses was 27·5 per cent., the same ratio as recorded for 1914.

PUBLIC SERVICE SUPERANNUATION FUND.

Under the authority of an amending Act passed last session the Board itself has undertaken the investment of the moneys belonging to the fund, in place of the Public Trustee, who hitherto has controlled the investment on behalf of the Board. It is anticipated that the interest derived from the investment of the fund will thus be increased, and that the effect will be to relieve the Consolidated Fund of part of its liability.

EDUCATION.

Every endeavour is being made to keep down expenditure, and in this respect the Education Boards are assisting the Department. Any increases which may appear in the estimates for the current year will be due to statutory provisions. The largest increase is that of £38,000 in the item for public-school-teachers' salaries, due partly to the natural increase of attendance and partly to the amending provisions of the Education Act, 1914, relating to staffing of schools and salaries of teachers. Of this sum about £25,000 is absorbed by the annual increments in the teachers' salaries, and the remainder is due to increases in staff. The erection of new school buildings and additions to existing schools is being limited to those cases in which there is no alternative course open by which provision may be made for substantial increases in attendance. Strict economy is being exercised in the administration of the Industrial, the Special, and the Native schools directly under the control of the Department.

The number of teachers who have joined the Expeditionary Force is 360.

TEACHERS' SUPERANNUATION FUND.

The income during the year ended the 31st December, 1915, was £83,319, made up as follows: Contributions of members, £52,644; interest on outstanding contributions, £244; interest from Public Trustee, £13,359; contributions transferred from other funds, £72; Government subsidy, £17,000. The expenditure for the year was £45,438. The value of the Fund on the 31st December, 1915, was £340,582, as against £302,701 on the 31st December, 1914, an increase of £37,881. The number of contributors increased from 4,269 on the 31st December, 1914, to 4,444 at the end of 1915, an increase of 175. The annual allowances payable as at the end of 1915 were £39,000, as against £35,000 at the end of 1914.

Provision has been made for the payment by the Government of the contributions of members of the Fund who have enlisted with the Expeditionary Force until the release of the contributors from military duties. The number of contributors who have joined the Force is approximately 210.

PENSIONS.

A steady increase continues to be recorded in the expenditure under the Pensions Act, the gross payments for the past year being as follows:—

	£
Old-age pensions	479,389
Widows' pensions	36,357
Military (Maori War only) pensions	48,273
	£563,969

These figures show an increase of £23,920 over the gross expenditure during the previous year. As the Department has now received practically all the fresh applications following on the provision of the 1913 Act, under which the pension age for women was reduced to sixty, the figures may be deemed to represent a normal state of affairs. The increases for the various classes of pension are as follows: Old-age, £18,525; widows', £4,738; and military, £657.