the war. For preparation of wills and powers of attorney no charge is made. Where the Public Trustee administers or acts as attorney the charges are fixed on a specially reduced scale. In this way, as also in the control of enemy property and other matters, the Public Trust Office is rendering very valuable assistance during the war period.

INSURANCE OF PUBLIC BUILDINGS.

During the year claims amounting to £4,576 were paid out of the special sinking fund established to meet losses on public buildings destroyed by fire.

The annual contribution of £10,000 made by the Government was paid over to the Public Trustee, by whom a credit balance of £48,988 is now held.

STATE FIRE INSURANCE.

For the past year the volume of business and the profits derived by the State Fire Insurance Office have exceeded all previous records. The net premium for 1916 amounted to £82,694, as compared with £76,299 for the previous year, showing an increase of £6,395. The net profits, after placing £1,000 to Investment Fluctuation Reserve and £2,577 to Unearned-premium Reserve, amounted to £35,697. The largest profit previously recorded amounted to £25,652, for the year 1915. The loss ratio for 1916 was 28·22 per cent. of premium income, which is an abnormally low ratio. For previous years the loss ratio has ranged from 38·6 per cent. to 70·9 per cent.

The total accumulated funds at the close of 1916 amounted to £155,958, an increase over the previous year of £39,274.

GOVERNMENT PRINTING AND STATIONERY DEPARTMENT.

The inflated price of paper, stationery, and stores will necessitate a considerable increase in the vote required for the Printing and Stationery Department for the present year. In some cases prices have increased by as much as 200 per cent., and rarely can goods be purchased at less than an advance of 25 per cent. on previous values.

PUBLIC SERVICE SUPERANNUATION FUND.

During the year ended 31st December, 1916, retiring-allowances aggregating £11,693 per annum were granted to sixty-seven contributors by reason of age or length of service; fourteen contributors who retired as medically unfit were granted allowances amounting to £751 per annum; forty-four widows and fifty-five children were granted the statutory allowances, totalling £1,507 per annum; seventy-three allowances, amounting to £4,829 per annum, were discontinued. The total number of existing allowances at the end of the year was 1,233, representing an aggregate annual payment of £88,392. The total amount invested to the 31st December, 1916, was £834,341, yielding interest at an average of 5¼ per cent.

EDUCATION.

The year just closed has been marked by important reforms in the financial and administrative methods and general work of the Education Department. Special consideration has been given to primary education, and steps have been taken to make instruction more thorough.

The natural growth of the population compels an extension of educational facilities. This extension and the increase due to statutory provisions account for most of the additional expenditure included in the estimates for the year. The difference between the amount expended last year and the estimated expenditure for the year 1917–18 is £76,787, and of this amount £57,000 is due to increases in statutory grants.

It should be recognized that the Education vote is not utilized for primary, secondary, technical, and university instruction only. Of the total vote a sum of £61,000 was spent for the maintenance of industrial schools, institutions for the deaf, schools for backward children, infant-life protection, education of the blind, medical inspection, physical training, subsidies to libraries, and many miscellaneous services of a subsidiary character.