

The delays which in many cases have arisen in making appointments to the staff have been vexatious and discouraging, and have hindered the development and added to the cost of working the Department through the Board having been constrained to make temporary arrangements to carry on the work.

TRAINING OF STAFF.

It has become evident that before long some comprehensive and organized scheme for the training of officers must be embarked upon. The demand for skilled and qualified officers is rapidly outrunning the supply, and, as the Office cannot fairly expect to be permitted to deplete other Government Departments of their qualified men, it must face the question of training the junior officers now in its employ to fill the more technical positions in the future. The definite lines on which such training should proceed have not yet been determined, but the Board has given some preliminary consideration to the matter, and hopes to prepare a detailed scheme, and bring it into operation as soon as circumstances will permit. This will involve the expenditure of a considerable sum of money, but owing to the growth of the Office and the scarcity of trained men there seems no other course to adopt.

OVERTIME.

For many years past an inordinate amount of overtime has been worked by officers of the Department. The Board has been able to effect a substantial reduction in the overtime without interfering with the efficiency or despatch of the work. The reduction is in excess of £100 per month.

WOMEN OFFICERS.

One outstanding feature of the war period has been the extent to which women officers have been employed to carry out work hitherto performed by men. The women officers employed in the Head Office and District Offices of the Department on the 31st March numbered 163.

In order that the women officers on the staff might have a regularly constituted channel of communication with the Board a "Women's Welfare Committee," consisting of ten members, elected by clerical officers and by shorthand-writers and typists in equal proportions, has been set up to make any necessary representations from time to time regarding the welfare of the women staff.

REVIEW OF SALARIES OF TEMPORARY OFFICERS.

A review of the salaries of all temporary officers, both in the Head Office and at District Offices, has been carried out, and such officers are now paid the value of the work performed by them. The subsequent increases which they will receive subject to their work and conduct proving satisfactory, and the maximum amounts which will be paid to them whilst in their present positions, have been finally determined.

CREATION OF NEW AGENCIES.

During the year additional Agents of the Office have been appointed at Marton, Taumarunui, Te Aroha, Te Kuiti, Thames, and Whakatane.

The Agency at Gisborne has been terminated, and a District Office under the charge of a permanent District Manager has been opened.

SITES, BUILDINGS, AND PREMISES.

Sites for the erection of office premises have been acquired at Napier and Palmerston North.

NEW PREMISES REQUIRED.

New office premises are urgently required at Christchurch, Palmerston North, Masterton, Hamilton, Napier, and Gisborne.

Draft plans for the Masterton and Palmerston North offices have been prepared by the Government Architect, but it is probable that the erection of the buildings must be deferred until conditions are more favourable.