

3. THE WORK OF THE SUB-DEPARTMENTS DURING THE YEAR.

Census and Statistics Office.—Now that the war is over the Government Statistician will be able to extend his activities, and in the near future to make New Zealand statistics as complete as those of any part of the Empire. The staff has been strengthened, the main task now being to train understudies and assistants.

A start has been made with the annual instead of quinquennial collection of statistics of industrial manufacture. Good progress has been made with inquiries instituted after the beginning of the war respecting wholesale and retail prices, and a commencement made of similar inquiries with regard to wages and conditions of employment, and some work put in hand in connection with the regular collection of statistics of unemployment.

It is hoped that the war-time necessity for the omission of certain trade tables, the absence of which seriously affects the value of the annual statistics, will soon be past.

The Statistician's suggestion that the Municipal Handbook, now issued triennially, be expanded into a Local Authorities' Year-book is worthy of serious consideration.

Registrar-General's Office.—The revenue of the Office, which showed a severe drop in 1917-18, has recovered slightly, the figures for 1918-19 being £12,811, as against £12,450 in the previous year. Marriages and births again show a further decrease. The increase in deaths is, of course, due to the epidemic.

Considerable time was again taken up in searches for the Defence and Pensions Departments on matters arising out of the war.

The medical and dental registers show how differently the war affected the two professions, the former showing a steady increase in each year from 1915, and the latter a decrease.

Dominion Laboratory.—The total number of samples examined was 3,492, against 3,874 in the previous year. Explosives imported and examined totalled 1,615,400 lb., against 877,550 lb. last year; detonators 2,045,000, against 1,510,000; fog-signals and fireworks (packages), 1,559 against 1,384.

The Dominion Analyst is continuing his kauri-gum researches. It is satisfactory to note that his process for cleaning gum recovered from swamp peat has proved a commercial success.

The full Laboratory Report, published in booklet form, will contain graphs showing the average composition of milk received each month, and a comparison of this with the averages for the Aylesbury Dairy Company, London.

Dominion Museum.—The Director's report shows very clearly the handicap under which his staff are working, the loss of valuable private collections that would in the ordinary course have been lodged in the Museum, and the danger to collections already therein, all caused by the present non-fireproof, borer-infested building, which is too small by far. The accommodation difficulty is being aggravated by the establishment of a National War Museum Section.

Notwithstanding this handicap much good work has been accomplished by the staff, and additions to the collections (notably for the War Section) made by purchase, exchange, and donations.

II. STAFF.

Owing to the steady increase in the staff of the Department it was found necessary during the year to create a special section and appoint an officer to be engaged wholly on staff work. Now that the war is over a considerable portion of the temporary staff engaged on work of the various branches arising out of the war—notably the Military Service Registration Branch—have been reduced, and with the return of officers from the front the question of reorganization of the various sub-departments will have to be considered. The Department employs a large number of discharged soldiers in the General Division, and the question of appointing these men to the permanent staff has been gone into, with the result that quite a number will be placed on a permanent footing and will be subject to the conditions and privileges enjoyed by permanent officers.

Mr. G. P. Newton, Assistant Under-Secretary, took over the responsibilities of my office during my absence in Australia on extended leave, and I desire to acknowledge here the able manner in which he discharged those duties during a very trying period, which included the disastrous influenza epidemic. I also gratefully acknowledge the true-hearted co-operation of my executive officers and heads of sub-departments, and to express the indebtedness of the Department to the junior officers who so loyally rose to the occasion when the staff was depleted of so many of their seniors.

III. ASSISTANCE RENDERED BY OTHER DEPARTMENTS.

The generous assistance rendered by other Departments again demands special acknowledgment. The Customs and Police Departments continued to afford invaluable help in the administration of the War Regulations dealing with passports and permits and of the Registration of Aliens Act. The supervision of patriotic raffles conducted under the Gaming Amendment Act, 1915, and the making of numerous inquiries in connection with the special licensing poll, were cheerfully undertaken by the police, despite an acute shortage of staff, and most efficiently performed. The Public Works, Lands and Survey, Justice, and Valuation Departments again lent their expert officers for commissioners dealing with local-government matters. The Post and Telegraph Department rendered valuable assistance to the Government Statistician in the preparation of various special censuses.

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J. HISLOP, Under-Secretary.