

1919.
NEW ZEALAND.

PRINTING AND STATIONERY DEPARTMENT

(ANNUAL REPORT OF THE) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH, 1919.

Laid on the Table of the House of Representatives by Leave.

SIR,—

Printing and Stationery Department, Wellington, 5th July, 1919.

I have the honour to submit the annual report upon the working of this Department for the year ended 31st March, 1919.

The tables accompanying the report show the nature, extent, and result of the year's workings.

Gazette.—The number printed was 1,690, the number of subscribers 183, and the amount received £289 9s.

Hansard.—The number of *Hansards* printed for session 1918 was 7,300, the number of subscribers 87, and the amount received £20 18s.

Stamp-printing.—The number of sheets of stamps of various values printed was 1,086,268, the number of stamps 148,402,873, and the value £3,418,361 10s. 4d. In addition 35,000 war-loan certificates, of a value of £791,900, were printed by this branch.

Stereo and Electro Plates.—The number of stereo-plates cast during the year was 26,318, the weight being 19,993 lb. The number of electrotypes was 5,571, and the weight 971 lb.

Rubber Stamps.—The number of rubber stamps made was 6,931.

Railway Tickets.—7,496,715 railway tickets were printed, the largest number (781,916) being printed in December.

Work of the Year.—The year has been a strenuous one in all branches, and two shifts have been worked throughout in the Machine Branch, and even then it has been difficult to keep pace with the extraordinary amount of work. The demands for printing are growing every year, and to keep pace with requirements it will be necessary to have the fastest machinery available.

Overtime.—It is still necessary to work a considerable amount of overtime, and though since the signing of the Armistice our employees have been steadily returning from the front, a fairly large number have yet to come back. Fortunately, most of our men have returned in good health, and have rapidly regained their pre-war usefulness.

Paper and Stationery.—There has been a fall in the price of paper since the close of the war, but prices are still high, and it is difficult to gauge the future in this respect. It is certain, however, that it will be some time before the position becomes normal, and it is doubtful if prices will ever come back to pre-war rates. We have, with considerable difficulty, been able to keep up our stocks, though at the present time, by reason of the improvement in shipping, the position is easing off, and more regular supplies are coming to hand.

To successfully carry out all the demands made upon the Department a careful check has been necessary in dealing with orders, and frequently the Department ordering has been asked to cut down numbers owing to the paper difficulties. As pointed out last year, sufficient consideration is not given in ordering, and if responsible officers gave more attention to this matter a deal of overprinting would be saved.

All items of stationery are difficult to obtain, even at enormously enhanced prices, and considerable inconvenience arises therefrom. This condition of affairs should show an improvement very shortly.

Machinery.—There is urgent need for more up-to-date machinery in all branches, and when the manufacturing business assumes its normal condition an officer of this Department should be sent to England and America to buy the latest and most suitable machinery available for the growing demands of the service. Five years ago Cabinet decided on this course, but the matter was postponed owing to the outbreak of war, and the office is now in a worse position than it was at that time. It is not economical to the Government or in the best interests of its employees that there should be a necessity for so much overtime being worked, but this can only be avoided by the installation of the best machinery available. Except in session time there should be no necessity for two shifts in the machine-room, but one cannot look forward to any change in this respect until faster and better machinery is installed. This, of course, means a considerable outlay, but good fast machinery always justifies the money expended in its installation.