

1920.

NEW ZEALAND.

PATENTS, DESIGNS, AND TRADE-MARKS.

THIRTY-FIRST ANNUAL REPORT OF THE REGISTRAR.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly pursuant to Section 113 of the Patents, Designs, and Trade-marks Act, 1911.

I HAVE the honour, in pursuance of section 120 of the Act, to submit my report on the operations thereunder during the past year.

The total number of applications was 3,226, as compared with 2,134 in 1918, an increase of 1,092, or 66 per cent. The highest number in any previous year was 2,695, in 1910.

The amount received in fees was £9,345 1s. 2d., an increase of £1,216, or 15 per cent., over the revenue for the preceding and previous highest year. The sum expended was £3,373 6s. 9d. This was £541 17s. 8d. higher than in 1918 (chiefly owing to amount of printing done), but lower than in 1914, and only slightly in excess of the expenditure for the intervening years. The balance was £5,971 14s. 5d., and this added to the total of receipts over expenditure since the 1st January, 1890, brings the amount to £85,428.

With the lowest scale in the world except the United States the amount received in fees compares favourably with that of other places. In Australia, where the fees are about the same, the amount received was £14,946 in 1918, as compared with the revenue of this country of £9,345 for last year. The policy adopted towards inventors by the Commonwealth, which does not look to them to contribute to the general revenue of the State, has no doubt not been without its effect in the marked development of the secondary industries of that country.

While, as required by the Act, prominence is given to an account of fees and expenses in this report, it should be borne in mind that the object of the patent law is the development of manufacture by the promotion of invention, and, as the consideration for the patent granting monopoly of the use of an invention for a certain time is the full disclosure of it to the public by means of the specification, the payment of fees beyond those required to meet expenses, although not uncommon in various countries, does not in principle seem to be sound.

As frequently pointed out, much might be done to foster and stimulate useful invention in this country by the adoption of the recommendations made from time to time in these reports, and it is hoped that more will be effected in this respect to develop and as far as possible direct into more profitable lines the inventive genius with which the people of this country appear to be so highly endowed.

The small proportion of inventions that prove remunerative renders it very advisable for inventors to ascertain as far as possible not merely the novelty but the prospects of commercial success of their inventions before going to much expense in patenting and exploiting them here, and more especially abroad.

The increase in the work of the Office without additional staff has led to delays and a large number of cases are at present pending. The inconvenience thus caused has been borne without complaint by applicants and agents, but it is hoped that better facilities for coping with the work, more especially as regards examination and searching, will be afforded.

PEACE PROVISIONS.

Provision was made by the Treaty of Peace for extending the time for payment of fees and taking other action which should otherwise have been effected during the period of the war, and the New Zealand Treaty of Peace Order applies such provisions with slight variations to this country. In a number of cases the extensions (for which no fees are required) have been granted, and many others are at present pending for evidence of nationality, &c. While the time allowed for payment of fees, &c., is extended until the 10th January next, that for filing applications to secure the prior date under the Convention was only until the 10th July, and inventors thus unable to obtain in this country the date of their applications abroad appear to be placed in the serious position of being liable to lose their rights by the prior publication of their inventions here.

AMENDMENT OF LAW.

Following the amendment of the patent law of the United Kingdom, proposals are under consideration to consolidate the law, bring it up to date, and effect improvements in other respects.