

1920.
NEW ZEALAND.

BRITISH EMPIRE STATISTICAL CONFERENCE

(REPORT OF GOVERNMENT STATISTICIAN ON).

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

The Hon. the Minister of Internal Affairs. Wellington, 2nd November, 1920.
I SUBMIT herewith the report of the Government Statistician on the British Empire Statistical Conference.

J. HISLOP, Under-Secretary.

New Zealand Government Offices, 415 Strand, London W.C. 2,
26th April, 1920.

Now that the Imperial Statistical Conference has completed its sittings, I beg to submit a report of the work done at the Conference, and of the inquiries so far made during my visit.

2. I left Wellington on the 21st November, 1919, and joined the Blue Funnel liner "Ascanius" at Sydney on the 29th idem. The four days in Sydney were almost entirely taken up in getting our passports viséd, for which fresh photographs were required. During the five days' stay in Melbourne I visited the Statistical Offices of the Victorian Government and the Commonwealth, and discussed statistical matters with the officials. The Commonwealth officers were engaged in preparatory work for the 1921 census, for the compilation work of which an installation of Hollerith machines has been arranged for.

3. On reaching Durban it was found that owing to the dockers' strike at Cape Town there was a congestion of shipping in port awaiting coal, with the result that my boat was delayed a week beyond schedule time. I was met at the boat by Mr. Carruthers, of the Union Government Statistical Office, from Pretoria, with whom I had a most interesting time. The statistics for the Union of South Africa are largely centralized in the Statistical Office at Pretoria. I was interested to learn that the Statistician there was assisted in his work by a Statistical Council consisting of both official and non-official members. Hollerith tabulating-machines are also largely used there, and found both economical and expeditious. They are used in the Statistical Office at Pretoria for the tabulation of the statistics of agriculture, vitals, law and crime, schools, &c., and these machines are also largely used in the Railway Department of the Union.

4. A separate branch of the Statistical Office is situated at Cape Town, which is the principal port of the Union for the compilation of the Customs or trade statistics. The Statistical Chief of that office, who is also a member of the Statistical Council, met me at Cape Town, and told me that Hollerith machines were used entirely for the tabulation, with the greatest satisfaction. He told me that although they were at first adverse to the adoption of the machine, they would not now revert to the former practice on any account, the machines performed the work so much more expeditiously and accurately, and with so much less worry to those responsible; also, much greater detail was obtainable for publication with practically little or no extra work. He was very emphatic as to the advantages of machine tabulation for Customs work. The Customs entries from all other ports of the Union were forwarded daily to the Central Office at Cape Town, where the whole of the statistics were prepared. I arranged for an explanatory memorandum of the method adopted for utilizing the machines on this work, with a full set of the various cards and forms, &c., to be forwarded to my office at Wellington.

5. Apart from the extensive use made of the Hollerith tabulating-machines, the feature of the South African statistics which impressed me as most desirable of adoption for New Zealand was their card system of obtaining statistics of migration (emigration or immigration). The position of New Zealand as an island makes the collection of migration statistics a comparatively simple one, and there is no reason why they should not be full and accurate. I have always considered our statistics of migration good, and so far as the totals of the arrivals and departures are concerned, the count of population at each census has proved them to be, on the whole, reliable and accurate; but as to the information obtained in regard to those arriving or departing, which would enable us to analyse the character and sources or destination of our immigration or emigration, our methods leave much to be desired. The matter has given me some concern, and how the methods could be best improved has been several times discussed by the Office during the past few years. Complete and accurate statistics of migration for our Dominion are of the greatest importance not only to New Zealand but to the Empire. You will remember that the Dominions Royal Commission laid great stress on the importance of migration within the Empire, and as New Zealand derives a considerable proportion of its increasing population from migration it is obvious that we should have full information as to the people we are absorbing into the country each year, and also as to those we are losing. I consider the card system in use in South