

Opossums.—For the first time provision was made for an open season for the taking or killing of opossums during the month of June last year. Large numbers of these animals were taken, principally in the Otago, Wellington, and Southland Acclimatization Districts, comparatively few being taken in other parts of the Dominion. Special provision has been made to enable orchardists to destroy opossums at any time in any registered orchard, and also in certain areas in fruitgrowing districts, and in addition provision is being made to enable the destruction of those animals on any land within half a mile of any orchard. The whole question is being very carefully studied with a view of ascertaining relatively the possible value to the Dominion of the opossum as compared with any damage likely to be caused to property of fruitgrowers and others by that animal, and in the meantime it has been decided not to authorize the capture of opossums for the purpose of liberation in any district.

GOVERNMENT STATISTICIAN.

The activities of the Office during the last twelve months have been directed principally towards the compilation of the 1921 census results, and beyond the inauguration of a new system of migration statistics, referred to in my last report, no new branches of statistical work have been undertaken.

Census of 1921.—Part I of the Census Results, dealing with the distribution of the population throughout the Dominion, was published last January, and appendices have also been published containing statistics of the Maori population, the population of Cook Islands and Western Samoa, libraries, religious denominations, poultry, and bees. Owing, however, to the immense amount of coding work involved in connection with the utilization of mechanical appliances for census work, it will be some considerable time before the social statistics to be compiled from the census schedules are available.

Mechanical Appliances for Census Work.—The mechanical appliances ordered for use in connection with the census work arrived in New Zealand in May, 1921, and were installed on the return, a few weeks later, of the officer who had been sent to New York to obtain knowledge and experience of the machines. The appliances have given thorough satisfaction, though a proportion of faulty cards in the consignment obtained from England has caused a certain amount of trouble and delay. The machines have been utilized both for census work and in the compilation of the new migration statistics, and it is intended to extend their use in other directions as opportunity offers.

Publications.—The remodelling of the Year-book authorized last year by the Hon. the Minister has been satisfactorily carried out, and the book has been well received. This year the new policy authorized at the same time in connection with the annual volumes of Statistics of New Zealand will be inaugurated. Hitherto the Statistics have been published as a single comprehensive volume (in four parts), and in addition to statistical matter prepared in this Office have included statistical tables extracted from parliamentary reports. In future the statistics compiled in this Office will be published annually in the form of separate Statistical Reports with some introductory explanatory matter, while a saving of some two hundred pages will be effected by the non-inclusion of extracts from parliamentary papers. Nine volumes will be published annually, as follows:—

Volume.	Approximate Number of Pages.	Price.
		s. d.
Population	30	1 6
Vital Statistics	160	3 6
Justice	75	2 0
Trade and Shipping	400	10 0
Agricultural and Pastoral Production	40	1 6
Manufacturing Production	60	2 0
Insurance	20	1 6
Local Governing Bodies	160	3 6
Miscellaneous : Meteorology, Bankruptcy, Building Societies, Prices, Statistical Summary	40	1 6

The prices quoted represent a considerable increase on those hitherto charged for the corresponding parts of the statistical volume. Increases in price have also been made in the case of the Year-book (now 7s. 6d. per copy) and the Monthly Abstract (1s. per copy, or 10s. 6d. per annum), this being in pursuance of the policy recently laid down by the Government with a view to making statistical publications more self-supporting. As a further step in this direction the free-distribution list of all the publications of the Office have been drastically curtailed.

Registration of Aliens.—At the 30th April, 1922, there were 8,984 names on the Dominion Register of Aliens, as compared with 9,021 a year ago. The principal nationalities concerned were—China, 2,971; United States, 800; Jugo-Slavia, 793; Germany, 784; Denmark, 582; Sweden, 473; Norway, 421; Italy, 285; Switzerland, 260; France, 206; Finland, 185; Syria, 151.

REGISTRAR-GENERAL.

Statement of the business transacted for the year 1921: Birth entries, 30,075; death entries, 10,734; marriages solemnized, 10,674; marriages by Registrars (included in the 10,674), 1908.

Particulars in respect of Maoris are as follows: Births, 1,040; deaths, 789; marriages, 210.

Medical Register.—Number on Register, 1st January, 1921, was 1,064, and at 31st December was 1,071.