

STAFF.

In sympathy with the general depression a falling-off in the Department's business became particularly noticeable in the returns for October; and, although the reduction had been anticipated and in consequence staffs had been kept at a minimum, it was necessary when the reduction took full effect to take exceptional methods of reducing expenditure on staff. The first step was to cancel the payment of overtime and substitute the system of granting "time off" for hours worked in excess of the regulation forty-four per week, and for Sunday and holiday duty, the new arrangement applying from the 8th December. Action was next taken, in accordance with a general Government decision, to arrange the retirement of a number of long-service officers who were eligible to receive superannuation, 105 ceasing active duty in the first three months of 1931. These two actions enabled the Department to absorb a number of officers who had become supernumerary as a result of reduced business. Arrangements were also made to amalgamate with the clerical branches of the chief post-offices the stores branches at Auckland, Christchurch, and Dunedin, this enabling important staff savings to be made. From the 1st April, 1931, it is intended to place the Wellington Telegraph Office under the control of the Chief Postmaster, and this will make possible a further substantial saving. The Telegraph Offices at the four centres, which until a few years ago were under separate control, will then have been brought under the control of the Chief Postmaster in each case.

In the table published below it will be observed that the staff of casual employees has been considerably reduced during the year. Construction works initiated last year have been completed, and very few new works have been authorized; and, consequently, the need for a large casual staff has vanished.

It is pleasing to be able to acknowledge the whole-hearted manner in which officers of all ranks have assisted in practising the economy that is so necessary at the present juncture. Officers quickly appreciated the position, and many valuable suggestions for effecting savings were submitted. It has been possible to adopt a number with a resultant saving in men and money.

A great deal of additional work was thrown upon officers during the year by the Department being required to take registrations, to accept payments of levy, and to make wages payments under the Unemployment Act of 1930. Additionally, Postmasters are in many cases required to act as Government representatives on local Unemployment Committees and as certifying officers in respect of payments made under the Act. It is gratifying to record that the manner in which Postmasters and other officers have carried out the many and varied duties required of them in connection with unemployment has been the subject of favourable comment by the Unemployment Board.

In the unexampled stress of work that arose in connection with the severe earthquake in Hawke's Bay in February, officers cheerfully undertook without complaint long and arduous duties, and performed them in a manner that could not have been bettered. Full particulars are given in the report of the earthquake, which commences on page 11.

COMPARATIVE RETURN OF PERSONS EMPLOYED IN THE DEPARTMENT.

The total number of persons employed on the 1st April, 1930 and 1931, was as under:—

Permanent staff—					1st April, 1930.	1st April, 1931.
Administrative Division	..	..	..	..	4	4
Clerical and Engineering Divisions	..	..	..	..	3,485	3,484
General Division	..	..	..	..	5,456	5,413
					8,945	8,901
Temporary staff	..	..	..	..	76	53
Casual staff	..	..	..	..	698	265
					9,719	9,219
Non-permanent staff—						
Country Postmasters and Telephonists	..	..	..	..	1,786	1,710
Postmasters who are Railway officers	..	..	..	..	86	83
					11,591	11,012

HEALTH OF PERMANENT STAFF.

The following table gives the average absence of officers on sick-leave this year as compared with last:—

Year ended 31st March, 1931—			Number on Staff.	Average Absence per Sick Officer.	Average Absence for each Officer employed.
Men	..	..	8,151	10.5	4.22
Women	..	..	750	14.29	7.9
Year ended 31st March, 1930—					
Men	..	..	8,198	9.62	4.98
Women	..	..	747	16.05	10.10

The figures indicate that the health of the staff has been well maintained.