

TRAVEL TO AND WITHIN THE DOMINION.

A new record was set in passenger-booking sales by the Department's branches and agencies overseas and within New Zealand, the total turnover for the year amounting to £533,847, as against £480,788 for the previous year, an increase of 11 per cent.

During the past six years tour sales have increased by £292,432, a result which can be considered as very satisfactory and indicative of the growing popularity of the service rendered by this branch of the Department's activities.

Detailed arrangements in connection with tours sold overseas are made by the New Zealand offices, and many complimentary references have been made to the efficient work of the various branches. The departmental representatives in other countries report, without exception, that returning tourists have expressed appreciation of the advice and personal attention extended to them by the staff of the Tourist Bureaux in the Dominion.

As far as is practicable the Department has for many years endeavoured to extend courtesies and give personal service and unbiased advice to tourists visiting this Dominion, and, despite the pressure of work due to the large business now being handled, this policy remains unchanged.

Many countries have of recent years recognized the desirability of developing tourism as a State activity not only the tourist business from other lands, but also to encourage their own people to make use of the travel facilities provided.

It is interesting to record that, following the steps taken by Canada during 1934 to undertake tourist promotion as a national effort by the establishment of the Canadian Travel Bureau, the Federal Government of the United States of America has established recently a similar Bureau Service.

It is understood that the United States Tourist Bureau will encourage and assist all travel agencies engaged in promoting travel in the United States, territories and possessions, will supply information to foreign visitors, and will prepare and handle publicity programmes with the object of encouraging the use of American scenic, recreational, and travel facilities.

In my report covering the year ending the 31st March, 1937, attention was directed to the efforts made by the Department to secure the co-operation of travel agencies overseas, and during the year under review the Department's representatives in other countries made calls on many travel executives and were very active in keeping agencies fully informed regarding New Zealand, and in supplying all information required in costing tours.

Reports to hand indicate that the information supplied and the services rendered by the Department's Bureau staff have been appreciated by travel agencies, and greater attention is now being given by them to New Zealand travel, with the result that an appreciable increase has been registered in the total value of the bookings from this source.

Cruise travel from Australia to New Zealand again proved popular, and the eight cruises operated by the shipping companies were well patronized, the shore-excursion business for all cruises being handled by the Tourist Bureau staff of the Department.

In connection with this form of travel it is pleasing to record that arrangements were made for New Zealand to be included in the itineraries of three luxury liners sailing from American ports on world cruises next year. These cruises were widely advertised in the United States of America, and the New Zealand travel business should benefit considerably from such publicity.

The development of group tours overseas is now an important function of the Department, and during the period under review a number of inclusive priced tours were arranged, the most important of which were as follows :—

(1) *Reso Tour from Australia*.—This tour was organized and run in conjunction with the Victorian Railways Commissioners, and the party consisted of sixty-three members, who were representative of the commercial and farming interests in Victoria.

(2) *New South Wales Primary Producers' Party* consisted of thirty-two members from the dairying districts of New South Wales.

(3) *South Australian Farmers' Party*.—There were twenty-eight persons in this party, and a comprehensive tour of New Zealand was arranged.

(4) *British Bowlers' Party* of thirty-three persons spent approximately two months in the Dominion, visiting many towns from Auckland to the far south.

(5) *English Schoolboys' Party* of twenty boys and two masters, and a comprehensive tour was arranged for them, including the walk from Waiho Gorge to the Hermitage via the Copland Pass.

(6) *James Boring Party*.—This was a party from New York, and was arranged with the assistance of the Department's representative in Canada.

(7) *Far Harbours Tour* consisted of eight members, and was arranged by a large travel agency in New York.

In all group tours arranged by, or through, the Department it is usual for a member of the staff to accompany each party, a service which is much appreciated by members.

In overseas countries travelling in groups, or parties, is very popular, and as this form of travel attracts many people it is proposed in the future to develop this business as much as possible.

Considerable help was received during the year from various organizations throughout the Dominion in entertaining parties of tourists, and this assistance was much appreciated by the Department.

The rapid increase in the travel business in New Zealand during the past few years has made the work of planning tours much more difficult. The definite shortage of good hotel accommodation at some of the tourist resorts during the summer months has accentuated the difficulties. The shortage of good hotel accommodation in New Zealand is a very serious matter, and if the tourist traffic from overseas continues to increase the difficulty of accommodating travellers will become acute. During the year the Department provided additional accommodation at Lake Waikaremoana and Te Anau,