

Increase of deposits in savings-banks, and number of depositors.

In 1886 the depositors numbered 91,296; in 1887 the number was 97,496, and in 1888 it was 103,046. The average amount at credit of each depositor was in 1886 £23 3s, in 1887 £24 6s., and in 1888 £26 1s.. Between 1886 and 1888 the amount of deposits increased by nearly £558,000, and the number of depositors by 11,750. Of a total number of 84,488 depositors in the Post Office Savings-Bank, 62,831 persons, or nearly three-fourths of the whole, had sums not exceeding £20 at their credit. I append to this statement a very interesting table I have had prepared, showing a remarkably steady increase since 1886 both in the number of depositors and in the amount deposited, and I would particularly draw the attention of the Committee to this instructive fact: that the number of persons having deposits in the Post Office Savings-Bank not exceeding £20 increased from 57,368 in 1886 to 60,043 in 1887, and to 62,831 in 1888; and this is irrespective of similar small deposits with the savings-banks established under "The Savings Bank Act, 1858," with regard to which I have not the data before me.

Progress of Government Insurance Department.

The progress of the Government Insurance Department, and the position of its policies and business, may be viewed as affording further indication of the condition of that class of colonists (and it is a large one) who exercise prudent care and forethought for themselves and their families. During the past year the new assurances amounted to nearly £800,000, showing an increase on the average of recent years, and approaching in amount the whole of the new business effected by the foreign life offices having branches in New Zealand. The average amount of the individual assurances was larger than in previous years, being close on £270, which is an increase of fully £50 per policy as compared with the average of the three years immediately preceding. The average amount of the policies discontinued is smaller than that of any year since the initiation of the office, while the policies surrendered have been smaller in their total amount than in the preceding year. The accumulated fund has been augmented by £123,000 during the year. This fund at the present moment exceeds a million and a half sterling, having doubled in amount during the last six years. It is instructive to compare the total ordinary life assurance of New Zealand with that of other countries. The population of New Zealand possess £24 of life assurance per head, whilst in Australia this average is £19 per head; in the United States it is £8, in Canada £9, and in the United Kingdom £12 per head. The number of policies possessed by every thousand of population in New Zealand is 80; in Australia, 65; in the United States, 15; in Canada, 24; and in the United Kingdom, 26. The average amount of policy in the United Kingdom is £487; in Canada, £376; in Australia, £300; in the United States, £554; and in New Zealand, £295.

It is gratifying to note that, while the average sum assured by each policy is less in New Zealand than elsewhere, the total number of policy-holders in this colony bears a larger proportion to its total population than is the case in any other English-speaking community; and that, though the individual policies average a less sum than elsewhere, the number is so much greater that the total sum assured divided amongst the whole population gives a larger sum per head here than anywhere else. This, coupled with the facts I have given concerning the savings-banks and friendly societies, means two important things: that, in the means of saving, and in the will to save, the people of New Zealand are at least not behind their kin in other parts of the world.

Greatly-improved credit of the colony in London.

The last fact I will mention is an important one—the greatly-improved credit of the colony in London. I will give only a single instance. Eighteen months ago our 4-per-cent. stock was selling rather heavily at 96½; it is now worth from £105 to £106, with an active market. I venture to think we shall see a further rise when our true present position comes to be fully known, and a fair and unprejudiced comparison is made between New Zealand and the other Australasian Colonies.

Nevertheless public expenditure will still require watchful care.

In concluding, Mr. Hamlin, I would say that in giving prominence to these encouraging facts I desire again to impress on honourable members what I said in the beginning of my Statement—that our public expenditure will still require the most watchful care. My object has been, whilst drawing attention to many satisfactory evidences of increasing production and improved values, to lead to the conclusion that it is by such means, aided by public and private