

ANNUAL REPORT

INTRODUCTION

The Department closed its fiscal year with a record gross turnover of £1,200,000 from all sources. The last comparable pre-war year, 1937–38, grossed £707,000, and therefore the increase over the last “normal” period is £413,000.

The figures indicate the tendency of more and more New Zealanders to explore the natural tourist and holiday resources of their own country.

The Department has been able to extend its activities in certain directions and to translate into accomplishment some of its plans for development, but the progress made and the attainment of certain objectives still aimed for are conditioned by factors at present beyond control. Every effort has been made, to the limits of the capacity of all concerned, to implement and expand the functions of the organization in the national interest and for the benefit of the tourist industry as a whole. The Department's best endeavours have been made to provide the fullest possible measure of service to tourists, travellers, and all those who seek acquaintance with New Zealand's varied natural and sporting attractions.

THE GENERAL POSITION AND OUTLOOK

(a) THE OVERSEAS FIELD

Booking activities overseas were resumed in the preceding year, but were confined to the United Kingdom and Australia. The volume of business transacted in 1946–47 was relatively small. Bookings dealt with by overseas offices represented 3 per cent. of the total passenger-booking turnover, whereas in 1937–38, the nearest comparable “normal” year, business booked abroad represented 25 per cent. These figures must be regarded as relative only—many overseas visitors defer definite booking arrangements until arrival in New Zealand. Moreover, the only statistics available are those disclosed by departmental records. Data relating to independent travel and the activities of private agencies are, of course, unascertainable. The low percentage of visitors booked abroad is regarded as a reasonable indication of the present state of transport facilities. There is still a world-wide shortage of surface passenger transport and balanced time-tables are not in immediate prospect. Aerial passenger transportation frequencies from overseas countries have shown marked improvements, but, in the main, the fares remain rather expensive for the average tourist visitor.

The United Kingdom.—The Department's Bureau in London reports that the number of requests for information received continues at a very high level and that the proportion of firm tourist inquiries is increasing. The opinion is vouchsafed that this increase is due to a growing belief that the time is coming when steamship passages will be more readily available.

Travelling-expenses in Britain and Europe have risen very sharply since the war. Touring costs in New Zealand have not advanced in the same ratio.

Another factor favourable to the development of tourist traffic from Britain arises out of the passing of the Exchange Control Bill, which limits expenditure by British tourists in countries outside the sterling area to £75 per person per annum. A wealthy class of person in Britain has long been accustomed to spend the winter in the sunshine of milder climates such as the French or Italian Riviera. This is no longer possible, and the legislation mentioned will have the tendency of diverting to New Zealand, and other Southern Hemisphere countries, a number of tourists who, in normal circumstances, would go to the Mediterranean area.