

The following figures show the number of New Zealand branches and agencies open at 31st March in each of the last five years :—

	Branches.	Agencies.	Total.
31st March, 1946	135	79	214
31st March, 1947	136	116	252
31st March, 1948	140	118	258
31st March, 1949	143	124	267
31st March, 1950	147	138	285

The maintenance of our overseas banking connections receives constant attention, and we have world-wide agency relations with other banks which enable us to handle business in all countries. Our relations with our foreign correspondents are cordial and we have exchanged visits with many of them, particularly in England, Australia, Canada, and the United States of America.

TOURIST BUSINESS

The agencies maintained by the Bank at the airports and wharves at principal arrival ports have proved of real value to travellers arriving in New Zealand. This service is arranged so as to fit in with the arrival times of the various aircraft and vessels. We regard the development of tourist business in New Zealand as very important to the economy of the Dominion, and there is no doubt that it is very desirable that the traveller should be able to conveniently arrange his cash needs immediately on arrival.

Our offices are well equipped to provide for the travel needs of our customers, especially those proceeding abroad, and are rendering useful service in this connection. At Auckland, Wellington, London, and Sydney particular attention is devoted to this branch of our activities.

STAFF

During the past year the staff has shown a net increase of 41 compared with the previous year, bringing the total number to 2,140 in all. The steady increase in the Bank's business requires greater numbers of staff each year, and with the present shortage of labour there is some difficulty in filling our needs, but on the whole we have been able to obtain sufficient new entrants to keep our offices reasonably well staffed. The calls on the staff for compulsory military training will, of course, accentuate our difficulties, but we have no doubt we will be able to cope with them.

The increasing number of staff has in a number of branches fully taxed available working space and made conditions less convenient and comfortable than we care for. Every effort is being made to rectify the position, consonant with building permits being made available to enable the necessary structural alterations to the various premises to be carried out. The welfare and comfort of the staff continue to receive constant attention.

Mechanical book-keeping aids are being used increasingly, and we would proceed more rapidly with this but for the difficulty of importing the necessary machines.

The staff maintains its high reputation for rendering loyal and efficient service both to the Bank's customers and the public generally, and our Managers and other officers are energetic in promoting the growth of the business. The Board wishes to place on record once again its high appreciation of the services of the whole staff.