

36. From the foregoing statement it will be seen that a reduction of twenty-one in the number of staff employed has been effected during the year. This is in addition to a reduction of 121 in numbers for the year ended 31st March, 1922, and referred to in the previous report.

The staff is now at bed-rock. It is efficient and highly trained, and is capable of performing satisfactorily any work which is entrusted to the Office. It includes many officers of high educational and technical qualifications, and the presence of these officers on the staff is an assurance that the important and intricate work of the Office will be well done.

A pleasing feature is the fact that almost without exception the junior officers of the Department are actively engaged in study for either the Law Professional Examination or the Accountancy Professional Examination.

37. Transfers of staff have been kept at a minimum, and this has proved one of the greatest factors in enabling a reduction of staff to be made, and also in raising the standard of the work performed. Beneficiaries in estates and other persons doing business with the Office become accustomed to dealing with one officer, and prefer that the affairs with which they are concerned should be dealt with by that officer throughout the whole course of the administration.

The fact that changes have been avoided as far as possible is indicated by the reduction in the amount of travelling-expenses from £5,312 in 1921–22 to £3,919 for the current year. For the year ended 31st March, 1921, the expenditure under this heading reached the high figure of £7,293. The reduction which has been effected since that date is a measure of the stability which has now been established in the staff.

38. The improvement in the calibre of the staff has enabled the work of the Office to be performed expeditiously and within the appointed hours of duty. The large amount of overtime which was necessary even in pre-war days, and which naturally increased greatly during the war, has been practically eliminated. This is a most pleasing feature of the Office management, as it is generally admitted that constant overtime is uneconomical. It not only involves payments at rates in excess of the ordinary remuneration of officers, but it also tends to undermine the health and efficiency of the staff.

The following statement will show the improvement which has been effected in this connection: Amount paid in overtime during the year ended 31st March, 1919, £2,693; 1920, £1,740; 1921, £1,430; 1922, £414; 1923, £199. It will be seen that the amount paid for the current year is negligible.

TRAINING OF JUNIOR OFFICERS.

39. In last year's report reference was made to the system of training the junior staff of the Office, the principal means employed being the delivery of lectures by qualified officers on the theoretical side of the Department's work, and the institution of a special section in the Wellington District Office for the training of officers in the practical work of the administration of estates.

An expansion of this system has now been effected by establishing a training section for administration work in the Auckland Office on the lines of that at Wellington, and the establishment of sections at both Wellington and Auckland for training in the accounting-work of the Office. It is hoped at an early date to extend the system to other principal offices of the Department.

The whole system, combining as it does the theoretical and practical portions of the Office work, has proved of great value, and has provided a steady stream of trained and qualified officers to fill vacancies which occur by the resignation of officers or otherwise.

Each year a number of cadets in excess of the actual immediate requirements of the Office are appointed purely for the purpose of being trained in the work. These will form a reserve of staff to meet the increase of business to which the Office can confidently look forward in view of the number of wills which are at present held on deposit on behalf of living testators.