

ANNUAL REPORT.

ORGANIZATION AND STAFF.

The reorganization of the Department consequent upon the amalgamation of the Department of Tourist and Health Resorts, the Department of Industries and Commerce, and the Publicity Department in 1930 has been made fully effective during the past year.

By section 21 of the Finance Act of 1931, the Census and Statistics Office, previously administered as a branch of the Department of Internal Affairs, was transferred to the Department of Industries and Commerce, and the financial appropriations of the Department as a whole are now divided into three sections: (1) Industries and Commerce; (2) Tourist and Publicity; and (3) Census and Statistics.

During the past year the Greymouth Tourist Bureau was closed, and Messrs. Nancarrow and Co., Greymouth, were appointed as booking-agents. Agents were also appointed at Palmerston North (Messrs. M. A. Elliott, Ltd.) and at Masterton (Mr. R. H. Williams).

I contemplate the appointment of further agents on a similar basis in other towns where the Department is not at present represented, and where the circumstances do not justify the establishment of our own offices.

The results already achieved—despite the present unsatisfactory economic conditions—give every encouragement to this extension of the Department's service through agency arrangements.

Honorary agents of the Department who are able to assist both in matters of trade and tourist traffic have for some years past been assisting the Department at many points overseas. A further appointment was made during the past year in the person of Mr. S. Hutchison, a New-Zealander resident and in business in Shanghai. Appointments at Suva and Hong Kong are under action.

The gentlemen who have been appointed as our honorary agents overseas are in practically all cases New-Zealanders now engaged in commercial pursuits abroad, and the thanks of the Department are due to them for the loyal and effective work done in the investigation of trade matters and in relation to the distribution of publicity material.

As from the 21st June, 1931, the Department took over from the Railways Department full responsibility for the Auckland and Wellington Central Booking Bureaux, which had previously been administered jointly by the two Departments. A resulting economy in staffing represented a saving of approximately £2,000. There has been no loss in efficiency, and no reduction in the service to the public, while unified control has eliminated certain minor difficulties.

As from the 11th November, 1931, the Department took over, under the terms of section 19, subsection (4), of the Reserves and other Lands Disposal Act, 1931, the control of an area of approximately 150 acres of the Tongariro National Park on which is situated the Chateau Tongariro and its accompanying facilities.

The administration of this additional resort has involved increased work for the Department as a whole.

There have been no important changes in staff personnel during the year, and, apart from increased operations such as those just referred to, reductions in staff have been made and considerable economies effected. In view of the reductions effected in 1930-31, further substantial staff economies, unless accompanied by a reduction of departmental activities, cannot be secured without definite loss of efficiency.

I propose, however, to arrange, as far as circumstances will permit, to adjust the staff in certain branches a little more closely to the seasonal demands involved by the fluctuations of traffic.

Some extracts from the annual reports of controlling officers at various branches within the Dominion and overseas are quoted in Appendix A of this report. Appendix B gives a list of the high ascents from Franz Josef Glacier and from the Hermitage, Mount Cook, during the past alpine climbing season.

TOURIST TRAFFIC.

The past year has been a difficult one from the point of view of those catering for the tourist traffic in the Dominion. Both local and overseas traffic has fallen off materially as compared with previous years. The result of this is, of course, reflected in the financial returns of transport organizations and hotels. Although there has undoubtedly been a substantial decline in the business during the past year, many resorts have been able to report quite satisfactory business, and the extent of the decline in the tourist traffic has perhaps not been so great as might have been expected.

It has been noticeable from the experience of the Department's booking bureaux that the value and extent of the individual tours taken both by local and overseas travellers has been less than in previous years. There has been a tendency to economize and to limit the expenditure wherever possible.

During the past year the Department has been able to extend and improve its agency arrangements and contact with a number of the larger travel firms and transport organizations in North America. The New Zealand Trade and Tourist Commissioner, with headquarters at Toronto, has had opportunities of making personal contact with many of the large companies and booking offices who are able to influence business to New Zealand. They have been placed in possession of full information as to time-tables, fares, &c., and, where necessary, may now secure prompt assistance on matters of detail from the Department's Commissioner in America. The distribution of publicity material has also been greatly improved, and the result of these activities is manifesting itself in increased inquiries and definite business.