

Since the end of the financial year the position has still further improved, and the total amount at the credit of depositors now exceeds £50,000,000.

In my last report reference was made to the inauguration of a scheme by means of which savings-bank facilities in simple form are made available to primary-school children. Good progress has been made with the extension of the scheme, which is now in operation in the principal schools in seven of the nine education districts in the Dominion.

STAFF.

With characteristic efficiency and resourcefulness officers handled an increased volume of business during the year. Though it was necessary at times for staffs to work under considerable pressure, they proved equal to every occasion. Especially pleasing were the smooth manner in which the various improvements in services and innovations introduced were set in motion, and the initiative that was displayed in meeting emergencies that arose from time to time. That the service rendered to the public in innumerable ways was of the same high standard attained in previous years was evidenced by the remarkable absence of serious complaints and by the appreciation of officers' work expressed by people representative of all sections of the community. The manifold activities of the Department are now so interwoven with the lives of the people that there has been built up a relationship between the Department and the public that is without parallel in the Government service—a relationship that has its foundation in the unremitting efforts of officers to give efficient, loyal, and unselfish service at all times and in all circumstances.

It is scarcely necessary for me to say that I was very gratified when it became possible early in September to discontinue the arrangement of granting time off to officers for overtime worked, which had been in operation since December, 1930, and to revert to the system of cash payments for overtime. The loyalty and the devotion to duty displayed by officers remained undiminished throughout the years of financial stress, and it was only fitting that the earliest opportunity should be taken of granting them the recompense which the payment for overtime affords. Coincident with the decision regarding overtime was the announcement by Government that, as a result of the improvement in public finances, the salaries of all public servants would be increased by 5 per cent. from the beginning of the financial year. The continued improvement in the finances of the Dominion enabled Government to make, from the beginning of August last, a further increase of 7½ per cent. in the salaries of officers of the Public Service. That it has been possible to improve the position of officers to this extent is a source of much satisfaction to me.

VISIT OF HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS, THE DUKE OF GLOUCESTER.

A notable event during the year was the visit to the Dominion in December and January last of His Royal Highness, the Duke of Gloucester. The occasion was an important one for my Department, which was entrusted with the responsibility of providing special facilities for postal, telegraphic, and telephonic communication for the Royal party and entourage and of organizing the whole of the motor transport for the tour. Attached to the party were two senior officers of the Department, whose respective duties were the co-ordination of the communication arrangements and the control of motor transport. The special postal arrangements made included provision for the conveyance by air of English mails for the Royal party when acceleration in delivery could be effected by this means; and additional telegraph and telephone facilities were provided to ensure the expeditious despatch and the efficient handling of the large volume of press and other traffic arising out of the tour. No effort was spared to make available over every stage of the itinerary a service of maximum efficiency and convenience. So thoroughly were the communication and motor transport arrangements organized and carried out that no interruption of service or disorganization of any kind occurred during the tour. I am pleased to say that the work of my Department's officers in this connection met with the approval of His Royal Highness, who, at the conclusion of the tour, graciously expressed his appreciation of the efficiency of the arrangements and made the Transport Officer a Member of the Royal Victorian Order.