

Number of claims established	...	...	...	...	9,505
" deaths	...	...	...	...	157
" cancellations	...	...	...	...	32
					—
					189
Number of pensions in force on 30th June, 1899	...	...	...	...	9,316

No. 17.

(No. 60.)

SIR,—

Government House, Wellington, 5th September, 1899.

I have the honour to inform you that on the 7th October, 1899, whilst some blasting operations were being carried on with dry gun-cotton at Wellington by members of the Permanent Militia, an explosion occurred, causing loss of life.

My Government are desirous that the whole matter should be referred to the Imperial authorities for their opinion as to the cause of the disaster, and as a means of elucidating the cause of the deplorable occurrence.

I append herewith a copy of a letter from my Premier to the Agent-General for New Zealand in London bearing on the subject.

I have, &c.,

The Right Hon. J. Chamberlain,
Secretary of State for the Colonies.

RANFURLY.

Enclosure.

Memorandum for His Excellency the Governor.

THE Premier has the honour to acknowledge the receipt of His Excellency's memorandum (No. 28) of the 29th ultimo, and in reply thereto to forward for His Excellency's information a copy of a letter which is being despatched to the Agent-General by the outgoing San Francisco mail.

The Premier has the honour to request that His Excellency the Governor will move the Secretary of State for the Colonies to grant the assistance of the Imperial authorities in elucidating the cause of the deplorable occurrence.

R. J. SEDDON, Premier.

Premier's Office, Wellington, 4th September, 1899.

Sub-enclosure.

SIR,—

Premier's Office, Wellington, 1st September, 1899.

I have the honour to inform you that while some blasting operations were being carried out with dry gun-cotton at the Defence works in Wellington on the 7th instant, by members of the Permanent Militia, an explosion occurred by which three men lost their lives, and one was seriously injured.

The Government are desirous that the whole matter should be referred to the Imperial authorities for submission to the Home Office and military experts for their opinion as to the cause of the disaster, and I beg to forward herewith the following documents in connection with the matter for their information: (1) Copy of letter from Colonel Penton, Commander of the Forces; (2) copy of evidence taken at the inquest; (3) copy of the rider to the verdict of the jury; (4) copies of plans showing the structure on which the blasting operations were being carried out; (5) photographs of the scene of the explosion.

A portion of the rammer mentioned in the evidence, with which the gun-cotton was being rammed, and some of the concrete forming the structure upon which the blasting operations were being carried out, are being forwarded to you by parcel-post.

A box of the gun-cotton referred to is being forwarded to you in order that it may be submitted to official testing by the Imperial authorities.

I shall be glad if you will forward to me the opinion of the Imperial authorities on this matter as soon as it can be obtained.

I have, &c.,

The Agent-General for New Zealand, London.

R. J. SEDDON, Premier.

No. 18.

(No. 63.)

SIR,—

Government House, Wellington, 15th September, 1899.

With reference to your despatch dated the 13th July, 1899, relative to the university education of Roman Catholics, I have the honour to inform you that the charter of the New Zealand University states that its benefits are for all classes and denominations of our faithful subjects, without any distinction whatever. Accordingly the University of New Zealand itself, and the four

A.—2, 1900,
No. 9.