

special count is kept. This is much in excess of previous years; and as the correspondence is a fair index of the extent of the business of the department, the following summary for ten years may be interesting, as showing how the work has developed :—

| Years. | Inward Correspondence. | Outward Correspondence. | Total Correspondence. |
|------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1890-91 | 9,788 | 5,640 | 15,428 |
| 1891-92 | 10,000 | 8,400 | 18,400 |
| 1892-93 | 12,000 | 10,200 | 22,200 |
| 1893-94 | 16,000 | 12,600 | 28,600 |
| 1894-95 | 16,500 | 14,500 | 31,000 |
| 1895-96 | 15,214 | 13,300 | 28,514 |
| 1896-97 | 16,800 | 13,500 | 30,300 |
| 1897-98 | 17,200 | 14,300 | 31,500 |
| 1898-99 | 19,112 | 16,416 | 35,528 |
| 1899-1900 | 21,241 | 19,200 | 40,441 |
| Totals | 153,855 | 128,056 | 281,911 |

Besides ordinary clerical work a good deal of legal or semi-legal business is done, such as Proclamations, Warrants, Orders in Council, and similar documents, which are prepared for the signature of His Excellency the Governor and Ministers. Those relating to the administration of Crown lands, reserves, cemeteries, domains, &c., were mainly prepared under Mr. F. T. O'Neill's direction, and amounted to 357.

Those relating to roads and bridges under the Public Works and other Acts were for the most part prepared by Captain Barclay, and amounted to 222.

Mr. Samuel, Clerk of Titles, dealt with 3,724 Crown grants, warrants, certificates of titles, leases, &c.

In addition to ordinary routine of entering and recording correspondence, and of the special duties above mentioned, regulations were compiled and issued in respect to timber on Crown lands and in State forests, that caused much work. Contracts for the supply of grass-seed were prepared, and tenders invited. Several large returns were compiled for Parliament. A complete set of new forms for tables for annual report was compiled and printed. Circulars were sent to all the principal sawmillers in the colony on the subject of aid to persons injured in the timber industry, and their replies compiled. There were also many other duties performed that it is not necessary to mention specially.

Promissory notes for grass-seed supplied to settlers through this department on the occasion of the disastrous fires of 1898 are first deposited in the Treasury, but when they are dishonoured they are returned to this office for collection. Five hundred and thirty-two were taken, for £4,453 16s. 10d.; 232 fell due last year, for £1,675 8s. 1d., of which 130 were dishonoured, for £1,013 12s. 5d.

The correspondence in connection with naval and military &c. claims is still considerable, involving in many cases searches of documents many years old.

I inspected the office of the Auditor of Land Revenue, and inquired into the methods of work of that office, in April, 1899. During the year I also inspected the clerical work of the Auckland, Gisborne, Napier, and Blenheim offices of the department; and I held statutory inquiries under "The Public Works Act, 1894," under commissions from His Excellency the Governor, in respect to the control and maintenance of the Taraheru and Turanganui Bridges at Gisborne, the Mud-flat bridges at Havelock, and the Ashley Traffic-bridge near Rangiora. I also held an inquiry under the Governor's commission at Pleasant Point, as to the site for a proposed bridge over the Opihi River. The reports and notes of evidence in most of these cases were voluminous.

The following is a summary of the returns of co-operative labourers received weekly from the various districts. It shows the average per month for each district and the average for the year ended the 31st March last :—

| District. | April. | May. | June. | July. | Aug. | Sept. | Oct. | Nov. | Dec. | Jan. | Feb. | Mar. | Yearly Average. |
|-------------------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------------------|
| Auckland | 378 | 436 | 523 | 577 | 579 | 638 | 703 | 664 | 606 | 531 | 597 | 519 | 562 |
| Hawke's Bay | 198 | 221 | 216 | 241 | 251 | 271 | 254 | 244 | 221 | 229 | 221 | 189 | 230 |
| Taranaki | 166 | 265 | 332 | 345 | 375 | 369 | 330 | 292 | 246 | 217 | 138 | 142 | 268 |
| Wellington | 465 | 496 | 546 | 601 | 556 | 559 | 555 | 520 | 537 | 480 | 424 | 441 | 515 |
| Marlborough | 23 | 81 | 166 | 201 | 232 | 213 | 196 | 175 | 146 | 95 | 110 | 90 | 144 |
| Nelson | 10 | 3 | 20 | 14 | 27 | 31 | 24 | 29 | 47 | 34 | 42 | 40 | 27 |
| Westland | 41 | 46 | 30 | 26 | 22 | 16 | 13 | 13 | 21 | 29 | 43 | 48 | 29 |
| Canterbury | 23 | 24 | 24 | 17 | 44 | 43 | 25 | 26 | 33 | 20 | 10 | 10 | 25 |
| Otago | 78 | 75 | 81 | 93 | 109 | 124 | 115 | 104 | 109 | 126 | 123 | 95 | 103 |
| Southland | 72 | 55 | 55 | 63 | 82 | 63 | 52 | 45 | 65 | 94 | 97 | 111 | 71 |
| | 1,454 | 1,702 | 1,993 | 2,178 | 2,277 | 2,327 | 2,267 | 2,112 | 2,031 | 1,855 | 1,805 | 1,685 | 1,974 |