

AMERICAN TOURIST TRAFFIC.

The Department is still in communication with the Hawaiian Promotion Committee and other organizations in regard to developing the above, but in the absence of a direct steam passenger service from San Francisco or Vancouver to New Zealand it is felt that the present is not an opportune time to enter into any definite arrangements which may necessitate an outlay of any considerable sum of money.

AGENCIES.

The branch offices of the Department in New Zealand are becoming year by year more popular with the travelling public, the number of inquiries dealt with by these offices during the past year being 44,890, showing an increase of 3,267 over the previous year.

Very good work has been done by the agencies in Sydney and Melbourne. Apart from their usefulness in bringing under notice of the Australian people the attractions of New Zealand, valuable work has been done by these agencies in fostering immigration of a desirable class, and very many settlers with quite a considerable amount of capital have been induced to come to New Zealand by the information which they received from the Agent either at Sydney or Melbourne.

The value of the agencies of the Department would be greatly enhanced if it were empowered to issue tickets to travellers over all railway, coaching, and steamboat lines throughout the Dominion. This is a work which I consider the Department should undertake in the interests of the travelling public. The want of such a system places the Dominion far behind other countries in the facilities and conveniences offered to travellers.

The Government Agent at Sydney writes:—

“The year under notice must be considered most satisfactory, in view of the gratifying development of the passenger traffic which has shown abnormal increases since the inception of this agency in 1906. The number of persons carried out of the Port of Sydney to either Wellington or Auckland during 1906–7 amounted to 11,362, whilst in 1907–8 no less than 18,979 passengers embarked for the Dominion, and 1908–9—the third year of the Department’s operations—the great number of 21,996 was carried. These figures evidence the value and volume of the oversea traffic, and serve in a measure to justify the existence of the office, and at the same time to demonstrate the fact that the agency is appreciated by the people of the Commonwealth. This year the number of callers amounted to 17,007, and every effort was made to stimulate a healthy interest in New Zealand and its wealth of scenic attractions. The dissemination of literature has been zealously attended to, and specially prepared parcels of printed matter has been placed in the principal hotels and libraries of mail-steamers, &c. The work of attracting people from this and adjoining States has been further catered for by the judicious loan of lantern-slides, which have been affectively used for advertising the Dominion. The promotion of settlement has engaged a good deal of attention, and the result of the agency’s work in this direction has been very gratifying.

“*Tourist Traffic.*—The remarkable increase in the number of passengers carried serves to show the buoyancy of the tourist traffic, and I am of opinion that the increase will continue. Hitherto, Tasmania and the Blue Mountains have claimed a large number of pleasure and health seekers, but as New Zealand is becoming better known, a greater number will select the Dominion for preference in which to spend their holiday vacation. Queensland has never yet been properly exploited, and, from inquiries to hand, I am convinced that if more attention were devoted to this State very satisfactory results could be achieved. The difficulty at present is that there is no local place where information can be obtained direct. Neither of the shipping companies trading to New Zealand are directly represented, and, in consequence, many inquiries find their way to this office, whilst others are not gone on with. Reviewing the work of the year, much has been accomplished, and evidence is not wanting that New Zealand will continue to derive practical value from the scope and operations of the agency.

“*Display of Exhibits.*—During the year many of the exhibits at this agency were renewed, and strangers visiting the office may now not only view a handsome collection of pictures, but inspect samples of most of the Dominion’s products. Whilst neglecting no opportunity for developing the tourist traffic, the commercial side of the agency has not been lost sight of, and this is referred to in a special report.”

The Government Agent in Melbourne writes:—

“The number of inquiries received during the year just closed has considerably increased, and the usefulness of the Melbourne offices both to local residents and to those from abroad (who evidently appreciate the conveniences placed at their disposal for obtaining reliable and up-to-date information regarding Dominion affairs) has been more than ever apparent. The variety of subjects on which we are constantly questioned has also widened, embracing as they do the following branches of the public service—namely: Customs, Patents and Trade-marks, Agriculture, Lands, Labour, Immigration, Finance, Railways, statistical and industrial trading concerns, &c.

“By degrees Dominion matters are becoming concentrated within the walls of the agency, and the public are quick to make use of the facilities afforded them, as the following figures—carefully recorded during the year—prove: Callers, 15,811, of whom 1,532 were from foreign countries and 14,279 local, or an average of fifty a day. This is an increase on last year’s visiting list of 3,829.

“As illustrating the estimation in which our representation is regarded I may mention that when it was recently mooted in the State Legislature that the Minister of Lands should be sent to New Zealand to inquire into the land-for-settlement scheme, labour laws, State coal-mines, and other matters, it was pointed out by one of the members of the House that there was no need for this, seeing that an agent for the Dominion was located in the city from whom all information on such subjects could be obtained.

“The fact that all the Australian States are entering on a vigorous immigration and advertising policy, and at the same time drawing special attention to their own individual attractions, enhances the importance of our presence in Victoria. Persons arriving from foreign countries as