

There is no doubt that as full inquiry as possible is desirable into the question of novelty, but to conduct a thorough investigation a large expert examining staff is necessary. Apart from the requisite preliminary classification, which occupied the staff of the English office and an extra hundred officers three or four years, and would involve the same amount of work in this country, an examination of back records, consisting of the vast accumulation of specifications numbering over a million technical journals, and fresh specifications from the United States, England, Australia, and other countries received at the rate of about 170 a day, is a work of great magnitude. The staff employed in certain examining countries is as follows :—

Country	Staff.	Applications per Annum.			Extent of Search.
		Patents.	Designs.	Trade-marks.	
United States of America ..	855	60,344	1,131	8,857	Full. English specifications only for last fifty years.
United Kingdom ..	679	29,353	43,057	9,743	
Australia	47	2,840	Australian specifications only.

It is difficult to estimate from these figures the exact number of examiners that would be required in this country, but after the initial work mentioned twenty would probably be necessary to search all records, and twelve the New Zealand and English specifications. Even the addition of two or three to the present staff, however, would enable a much fuller search to be made, and go a considerable distance towards increasing confidence in a New Zealand grant. Though not requiring, the Act appears to intend that searching should be a recognized part of the work of the Office, and I trust that as adequate provision as possible will be made for carrying it out.

PATENTS.

For patents 1,740 applications were received—91 less than in 1910—1,061 with provisional specifications and 679 with complete specifications. There were lodged 346 complete specifications in respect of applications for which provisional specifications had already been filed. The total number of specifications for the year was 2,086, or 46 less than in the preceding year.

The falling-off in fees on applications was more than made up by the increase in the payments for sealing and renewal, and the total fees in respect of patents was £5,277 6s. 9d., £117 16s. 3d. higher than in 1910.

While, as I have pointed out, this office is only able with its present staff to investigate the novelty of inventions to a limited extent, its action results in the non-acceptance of a number of applications, and the limiting of the claims in others.

COUNTRIES FROM WHICH APPLICATIONS ARE RECEIVED.

The smaller total for the year was the result of a slight falling-off in applications from within and outside New Zealand in about the same proportion, as shown by Table H. Residents of New Zealand sent in 1,180 (1,240), United Kingdom 140 (150), United States 94 (120), Commonwealth 260 (258); Canada sent 11 (19) applications, Germany 21 (15), and South Africa 6 (8). The figures in parentheses are the numbers for the previous year.

SUBJECT-MATTER OF INVENTION.

It is satisfactory to note that the numbers of applications in respect of dairying (including milking-machines)—112 (110); fibre-dressing—63 (70); as well as fencing—49 (34); and others connected with our principal industries, are well maintained, as inventions on these subjects are probably of the greatest benefit to the country and at the same time most remunerative to the inventor. The most noteworthy increase in any class is in cutting and sawing, and tools—83 (38)—chiefly due to the number of inventions (such as nozzles and piercers) for extracting contents from petrol, kerosene, &c., tins, and inventions for hand tools, such as shifting-spanners, saws, and sawing accessories. Wearing-apparel and the like also shows a large increase—75 (57)—chiefly due to the number of hatpins and hatpin-point protectors. In 1910 and 1911 there were 22 and 32 applications respectively.

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION.

The applications received under the International and Intercolonial Arrangements still continue to increase, 134 (or 7 per cent. of the total for the year) being received. The countries from which these applications came to hand are as follows: Australia, 66; Great Britain, 52; United States of America, 8; France, 5; Austria, 2; Germany, 1. The terms of the Convention were recently revised at a conference at Washington, without, however, materially altering them in their essential particulars.