

To His Excellency the Right Honourable Arthur William de Brito Savile, Earl of Liverpool, Knight Grand Cross of the Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George, Member of the Royal Victorian Order, Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief in and over His Majesty's Dominion of New Zealand and its Dependencies.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

As Commissioner appointed under the Public Service Act, 1912, I have the honour to submit the following report, as required by section 15 of the Act.

REPORT.

1. IN common with other institutions the Public Service has, owing to staff conditions, had a strenuous time during the year. Not only have Heads of Departments had to cope with the loss of their own officers for military service, but developments in some Departments have had the result of causing vacancies, which have been filled by transfer of officers from one Department to another.

2. The number of officers absent with the Expeditionary Forces on the 31st March, 1918, was 2,509, an increase of 376 over the previous year. The wastage of the permanent staff numbered 1,514, as compared with 1,183 in the preceding year, necessitating the filling of 1,890 positions. The increase in wastage is principally in the Post and Telegraph Department, where it has risen from 5 to 9 per cent. The number of officers discharged from the Expeditionary Forces was 266.

3. Permanent Heads have had many difficulties to overcome, and the Commissioners must express their appreciation of the manner in which unavoidable temporary derangements of staff, which have at times occurred, have been met.

4. Notwithstanding all staff difficulties, the efficiency of the Service has been well maintained. Reference was made in the Fifth Report to the fact that until last year there had been little restriction of facilities to the public. Recently, however, the Post and Telegraph Department has found it necessary to curtail its services in several directions, and as time goes on it will no doubt be necessary for other Departments to make similar curtailments.

5. Experience during four years of war has shown that the system of central recruiting of temporary employees, which followed the coming into force of the Public Service Act, has avoided many difficulties and kept expenditure to a minimum, which could not have been done under any system of recruiting by individual Departments. It is interesting to note that a Committee sat this year in London, and principally owing to the competition between Departments, the varying rates of pay, differing hours in different Departments, and the payment of overtime in some Departments and not in others has recommended, after considerable inquiry, that a system of central recruiting should be adopted in London for temporary employees.

6. Recruiting has been fairly satisfactory, although at times the list of suitable applicants has been exhausted. Owing to the centralization of Defence and other activities in Wellington, the main difficulty is in supplying staff for offices in that city. The disinclination of young people to leave their homes is accentuated by the scarcity of lodging-accommodation, particularly for women, in Wellington. Several institutions are making an effort to relieve this by the establishment of hostels, but this work is proceeding so slowly that it will apparently be necessary either for Government to establish hostels of their own or to subsidize approved institutions.

7. There are 4,153 women in the Service in a permanent or temporary capacity, as compared with 1,826 before the war. While there are many positions in the Public Service which, for good reasons, cannot be filled by women, the Commissioners record that women are now satisfactorily performing work which Departments would have hesitated to entrust to them before the war. The zeal, diligence, and good conduct of the large number of women, of whom the greater proportion had no office experience before joining the Service, merits praise.