

time to extend the scope of what may be termed the ordinary work of the office. The vacant position of Compiler in Charge of Industrial and Economic Statistics being filled by the appointment of Mr. G. W. Clinkard, it was found possible to proceed with the collection and compilation of statistics of wholesale prices.

I desire to draw attention to the special article on "Cancer Mortality in New Zealand" by Mr. J. W. Butcher, Chief Compiler, published in the "New Zealand Official Year-book" for 1917. This article has roused considerable interest, and is a good example of scientific statistical research. When times are again normal the publication of similar articles on other subjects will, it is hoped, be a regular part of the activities of the office. Research work of this nature can only be undertaken by men with special knowledge and training. The office is fortunate in now having men of this stamp occupying all the principal positions.

Registrar-General's Office.—The revenue of this office is the lowest for five years, this being explained by the very marked decrease in marriages. The table given in the Registrar-General's report shows that the marriages in 1917 were fewer by 1,267 than in 1916, which itself was the lowest for some years.

Considerable time was taken up in searches for the Defence and Pensions Departments on matters arising out of the war.

Dominion Laboratory.—The importance of the Laboratory to the Public Service alone may be judged from the fact that during the year the Dominion Analyst was called upon to do a large amount of work for the following Departments: Defence, Customs, Justice, Mines, Post Office, Public Health, Railways, Public Works, Marine, Lands and Survey, and Government Printing Office. Without it many of these Departments would necessarily either have had to pay considerable sums to private expert analysts or themselves establish laboratories.

It is interesting to note that the number of milk-samples taken during the year under the Sale of Food and Drugs Act, 1908, was 2,222—almost exactly double that of the previous year. Of these, 1,771 were taken in Wellington City. The results of analysis show a considerable improvement in the city milk-supply, due undoubtedly to constant inspection, and fines more in keeping with the serious nature of the offences in respect of which proceedings were taken than those generally imposed in previous years. Of particular interest are two tables, one showing the average composition of unwatered milk from Wellington and surrounding districts during the year 1917, and the other showing the average composition of milk supplied to the Aylesbury Dairy Company, London. The Wellington table, while exhibiting greater fluctuations, shows a higher average of fat and non-fatty solids.

Dr. MacLaurin's investigations on the recovery of kauri-gum from swamp peat are being continued with highly satisfactory results.

The report of the Chief Inspector of Explosives shows that the quantities of explosives imported were considerably less than those for the previous year. This decline is more apparent than real, being due to shipments arriving just before the 1st April, 1917, and after the 31st March, 1918.

Dominion Museum.—Under very adverse conditions the Director and his staff continue to do excellent work, but before long the Museum will almost cease to be a living institution on account of shortage of fireproof storage and exhibition space. Already many valuable specimens have been lost that would otherwise have come to the Museum.

The appeal for material for the National Historical Collection resulted in the presentation, *inter alia*, of two valuable historical documents—the official letter-book of James Busby, British Resident from 1833 onwards, and a manuscript history of New Zealand by the same gentleman.

Among the general acquisitions during the year was a collection of Maori garments and weapons and an inlaid writing-table from the estate of the late Mrs. Hunter Blair, of Edinburgh, the last-mentioned being considered to be the finest sample of cabinet work ever produced with New Zealand woods.

I have referred above to the Imperial War Museum. In his report Dr. Thomson gives an account of what has been done during the past year towards the gathering of a representative collection of materials for the War Section of the Dominion Museum illustrating New Zealand's part in the war.

II. STAFF.

During the year the staffs of the Head Office and branches have again been further affected by reason of voluntary enlistments of officers and the operation of the ballot. The policy of the Department has been not to appeal against the calling-up of its officers, and it has so far been found necessary to make but one appeal, that being the case of an Analyst in the Dominion Laboratory. I gratefully acknowledge the true-hearted co-operation of my executive officers and heads of sub-departments and the valuable services rendered by all members of the staff during a very trying period.

III. ASSISTANCE RENDERED BY OTHER DEPARTMENTS.

The generous assistance rendered by other Departments demands special acknowledgment. Without the help of the Customs and Police Departments efficient administration of the various War Regulations dealing with passports and permits would be an impossibility. Both these Departments, too, render valuable service in connection with administration of the Registration of Aliens Act. Again, this Department has made increased demands on the time of police officers in connection with raffle licenses issued under the Gaming Amendment Act, 1915. The assistance rendered by the Post and Telegraph Department has been of the greatest help to the Government Statistician.

I cannot conclude without expressing the Department's indebtedness to the Public Works, Lands and Survey, Justice, and Valuation Departments for the manner in which they have always met our requests for the services of their expert officers for commissions dealing with local-government matters.

I have, &c.,

J. HISLOP,

Under-Secretary.