

and has also kept the Imperial Government posted regarding the quantities of produce available for shipment from time to time.

In addition it has been called upon to meet numerous inquiries in connection with shipping matters generally, and has at different times collected information regarding hemp, tallow, pelts, case oils, &c.

The organization of the Department has been freely consulted by the business community in matters of commercial interest, and its endeavour has always been to render the fullest assistance in any direction possible.

It gives me pleasure to record the indebtedness of the Department to Mr. W. S. Bennett, president of the New Zealand Woolbrokers' Association, for the invaluable assistance and advice he has always rendered, and I would also express my appreciation of the thoroughness of the continuous audit conducted by the Controller and Auditor-General, who has arranged for a special staff to be attached to the Department for the purpose.

When the Department was originally constituted in March, 1915, to handle the arrangements in connection with the purchase of frozen meat, the staff consisted of five officers, including an Officer in Charge, two clerks, a typist, and a messenger; and on the 31st March last there were fifty-eight officers employed, including executive officers and clerks (44), typists (10), Burroughs adding machinists (2), and messengers (2). Of this staff only six are permanently classified departmental officers.

The total absence of precedents and the rapid growth in the Department's business have rendered the work of all officers particularly strenuous, and I have the greatest pleasure in bearing testimony to the application and ready co-operation displayed by all officers in the discharge of the duties entrusted to them.

Prior to September, 1917, matters of outside arrangements in connection with the purchase of wool, sheep-skins, and hides were undertaken by the New Zealand Government Requisitions Committee, and the Wool, Sheep-skins, and Hide Valuers and Inspectors of Wool-scouring Works and Fellmongers were also under the direct instructions of that Committee. In September, 1917, the Committee tendered its resignation, and the duties hitherto undertaken by it were placed under the direction of the Controller of the Department of Imperial Government Supplies, and Mr. T. R. Lees, the Assistant Executive Officer of the Committee, joined the staff of the Department.

In the same month it was found necessary, owing to the expansion of business, to obtain more commodious premises, and the Department was fortunate in securing its present accommodation. The offices occupied are centrally situated, well lighted and ventilated, and, being under one roof, are in all respects conducive to the prompt handling of the business of the Department.

I have, &c.,

R. TRIGGS,

The Right Hon. the Minister in Charge,

Controller.

Department of Imperial Government Supplies, Wellington.

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