

The examinations held were for extra first-class engineers, first-class engine-drivers, second-class engine-drivers, winding-engine drivers (steam and electric), locomotive- and traction-engine drivers, locomotive-engine drivers, and traction-engine drivers.

Reciprocal certificates were issued to applicants from other States as follows: Canada, 2; Transvaal, 2; Tasmania, 1: total, 5.

The total number who sat for the examinations was 501; of this number seventy failed.

Several new sets of examination-papers for first-class engine-drivers and other examinations were issued during the year to Examiners from the Head Office. All the questions set were of practical value to the applicants. Some of those who sat passed a very good examination, and they showed clearly that they had made a close study of their subjects. The appended return gives the names, &c., of successful candidates.

EXAMINATION OF ELECTRICAL-TRAM DRIVERS.

Examinations for electric-tram drivers' certificates were held at Auckland, Christchurch, Dunedin, Invercargill, Napier, Wanganui, and Wellington. The number who sat for examination totalled 101, one out of this number failing. More than one examination was held at the places named, and special examinations were held to suit the convenience of the tramway service throughout the Dominion. The appended return gives the names, &c., of those who passed.

BOARD OF EXAMINERS.

The Board of Examiners, consisting of the Chief Inspector of Machinery of the Marine and Inspection of Machinery Department, the Engineer-in-Chief of the Public Works Department, the Inspecting Engineer of the Mines Department, and the Chief Electrical Engineer of the Public Works Department, with Mr. J. G. Macpherson as Secretary, sat at Wellington on eight days during the year.

Mr. Birks, who succeeded Mr. Parry as Chief Electrical Engineer for the Dominion when the latter resigned and went to Great Britain, was appointed a member of the Board during the year. The Board at its sittings dealt with many matters connected with requests to sit for examinations, and with numerous points raised by Examiners and applicants, and issued all the certificates to successful candidates.

CHANGES IN THE STAFF DURING THE YEAR.

Mr. George Allport, Secretary of the Department, left on the 31st December last on three months' leave of absence prior to retirement on superannuation. He left New Zealand on the 25th March on a trip to England, and it was with the deepest regret that news was received that he had died on the 28th March just prior to reaching Sydney. Mr. Allport joined the Service as a cadet in 1875, and had completed forty-five years' faithful and honourable service when he retired. The sincerest sympathy of the staff is extended to his widow and daughter in their great loss.

Captain H. S. Blackburne, Nautical Adviser and Principal Examiner of Masters and Mates, also retired at the same time, having reached the age-limit, but is being temporarily employed for two years to complete the compilation of certain nautical tables for the Government. Captain Blackburne has filled the position vacated for many years, and his decisions and advice at all times were very much valued by the Department. His interest in all questions connected with navigation problems is well known to all nautical men.

Captain G. G. Smith, Superintendent of Mercantile Marine at Wellington, retired on superannuation on the 31st March, having reached the age-limit. He filled the position with great credit for many years, and his judgment was highly valued by the Department and was considered at all times fair. Captain S. G. Stringer, Assistant Superintendent at Wellington, has been appointed to succeed him, and Captain J. W. Burgess, Surveyor of Ships at Wellington, succeeds Captain Stringer as Assistant Superintendent.

Owing to the considerable increase in the work of inspection, several transfers and new appointments in connection with the staff of Inspectors of Machinery were found necessary during the year.

Inspector S. N. Johnston was transferred from Hamilton to Dunedin as an additional Inspector for the Otago District, and Inspector J. Cable was similarly transferred from Palmerston North to Wellington. Messrs. R. Beveridge and H. McGregor were appointed Inspectors of Machinery at Hamilton and Palmerston North respectively to fill the vacancies caused by the aforementioned transfers. Messrs. H. S. Baldwin and E. Brown were appointed Inspectors and stationed at Wellington, and Messrs. D. Bell and E. Hargrave at Auckland and Christchurch respectively.

The new Taranaki North district was opened, with office at New Plymouth, and Inspector H. G. L. Noy, of the Wanganui office, was appointed to have charge of it. This partition of the large district formerly controlled from Wanganui has proved a success, making as it does for the more convenient control of the extensive district surrounding New Plymouth.

The opening of a District Office at Gisborne in the near future will be necessary, as this district is increasing in importance rapidly, and settlement is taking place in all parts of it.

Owing to my appointment as Secretary and retaining my old position as Chief Inspector of Machinery and Chief Surveyor of Ships, &c., I have combined the report, usually submitted by me as Chief Inspector of Machinery, &c., to the Secretary, with the general report of the Department this year.

I have, &c.,

ROBERT DUNCAN,

Secretary, Chief Surveyor of Ships, and Chief Inspector of Machinery.

The Hon. the Minister of Marine, Wellington.