

Staff.—The personnel of the staff has been considerably reduced in numbers during the past two years, partly by the retirement of senior officers whose places it has not been necessary to fill, and partly by the services of temporary clerks engaged for the purpose of the “compulsory” work having all, except two, been dispensed with, the “compulsory” work now being done, as above stated, by permanent officers formerly necessary for the ordinary registration work of the Department, but whose services for that purpose are in the meantime not required owing to the depression. Although the temporary clerks whose services have been dispensed with were competent and satisfactory, I am pleased to be able to state that it has been found that the comparatively junior officers trained in the Department, as well as the more senior ones, that are now engaged on this work, give greater satisfaction and produce more work than the others did. The “compulsory” work is keeping fully employed a considerable number of officers that during the depression would have had insufficient of the ordinary work to do. They are earning fees that nearly, if not quite, cover the amount of their salaries.

As this is the last report of this kind that I shall personally have the honour of making, it may not be out of place for me to state that I am proud of the personnel of the Department, from District Land Registrars down to junior clerks and cadets, and in my opinion an administrative officer could not wish for the control of a more satisfactory body of officers.

Safety of Records.—Subsequent to the Hawke’s Bay earthquake a report was obtained upon the efficiency of the rooms, from an earthquake and fire resisting point of view, in which the records of the Department are housed. It appears that the Napier fire penetrated the Land and Deeds strong-room through the coke-breeze concrete ceiling, and the report shows that one or two of the strong-rooms in which the registers are kept in other districts are made of similar material. I am of opinion that in several cases at least records are not even reasonably safe from destruction in a fire of ordinary magnitude. This is notably the case in Wellington and Nelson, where I venture to think that the expenditure of perhaps £2,000 is urgently necessary.

The following table shows the amount of registration business under the Land Transfer and the Deeds Registration Acts transacted during the last five years:—

	Year ended 31st March,				
	1928.	1929.	1930.	1931.	1932.
Instruments	139,375	165,020	176,754	144,436	98,267
Searches (Land Transfer Act only) . .	40,254	42,568	46,613	41,240	27,727
Fees, excluding fees under Compulsory Registration Act, 1924	£86,604	£85,232	£90,482	£71,230	£44,945

Fees under Compulsory Registration Act, 1924—Paid for year ended 31st March, 1932, £4,522 ; outstanding, £27,199.

C. E. NALDER,
Registrar-General of Land, and Secretary for Land and Deeds.