

522. It has hitherto been the practice to pay allowances for special duties to other messengers, but these have now all been eliminated.

Saving in respect of salaries and allowances, £5,822.

Item—Travelling Allowances and Expenses, £325.

523. We are informed that the bulk of this expenditure was in connection with relieving allowances to messengers. Arrangements have now been made to provide relief without the temporary transfer of another officer, and there should be considerable savings under this item. The present system should be continued.

Saving, £250.

Item—Uniforms and Overcoats for Messengers, £350.

524. We find that this item has been under review, and that a saving in this expenditure can be anticipated in the future.

Saving, £100.

SUBDIVISIONS V.—HIGH COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE.

525. It was found impossible to review in detail the expenditure on this subdivision of the vote. It has grown very considerably, as will be seen from the comparative statement shown at the commencement of this report.

526. The numerical strength of the staff in 1914–15 was 52, while at the 1st April, 1927, the staff numbered 115. It has now been reduced to 72, but, while considerable reductions have been effected, **it should be possible to reduce the staff still further.** Many of the duties hitherto carried out by the High Commissioner's office will now be done by the various Produce Boards (Dairy Control Board and the Meat Control Board, &c.), and **we feel that there should not be the same necessity as existed previously for a comprehensive organization in the office of the High Commissioner.**

527. The net expenditure provided for during 1931–32 was £25,511, while the net estimate for 1932–33 is £26,838. No reduction has been provided for, and the increase in the expenditure over the 1914–15 figures still approximates 150 per centum.

528. **In our opinion, there is nothing to justify this huge increase, and we believe that a substantial measure of economy should be possible.** We are unable to point to any special item of expenditure which can be reduced, but we have no doubt that a thorough overhaul of the duties performed by the staff would disclose possible avenues of staff-reduction. We believe that a saving of £7,500 should be possible in this subdivision of the vote.

529. A considerable amount of work of an advisory nature is done in the High Commissioner's Office for local authorities and various institutions throughout the Dominion. This must involve a certain amount of expense and maintenance of a larger staff than would otherwise be necessary, and **consideration should be given to the possibility of making a charge on the local authorities and institutions for the value of the work done for the bodies concerned. There is no reason why the general taxpayer should pay for such special services.**

530. The offices occupied by the High Commissioner are situated at 415 The Strand, London. The property is a leasehold one, and the annual cost, including rent, rates, insurance, and upkeep, approximates £7,250. In 1926 these offices were considered unsuitable, and a new building at 429 The Strand was purchased at a cost of £157,000. The whole of this purchase-money has now been paid. It was impossible to obtain possession of these premises under the existing leases, but the Government has received a rental return since purchase. Up to the 31st March, 1930, the charges on the property, including interest on capital expended, depreciation, and repairs, totalled £39,675, whereas rents received during the same period amount to only £15,358, leaving a deficiency of £24,317, which must be regarded as a part of the cost of the building. It is now considered that the proposed offices at 429 The Strand are unsuitable, and it has been decided to sell this recently acquired property. It should here be stated that in the interim it was decided to dispose of the leasehold interest in the offices situated at 415 The Strand, and an agreement for the sale of this property was executed. When it was decided that No. 429 The Strand was unsuitable for the High Commissioner's Office, negotiations were entered into for the rescission of the contract for the sale of the leasehold of 415 The Strand, and this has been effected at a cost of £14,250.

531. It is now the intention to sell 429 The Strand, and it is thought that the sum of £190,000 may be obtained for this property. On this figure the Government will not be recouped for the original capital cost plus accumulated interest, and for the compensation for the rescission of the contract for the sale of the leasehold offices.

532. **The retention of 429 The Strand is costing the Dominion approximately £6,000 per annum and the property should be sold at the earliest suitable opportunity and the annual loss thereby terminated.**

SUBDIVISION VI.—MUSEUM.

Item—Salaries, £2,773.

533. This institution has been overstaffed.

534. There will be a reduction on the 1931–32 appropriations in respect of salaries, owing to death and retirement. **Further economies in staff should be effected.**

Saving, £358.