

Staff.

I am pleased to be able to refer in this report to the conference of Audit Inspectors, which was convened at the beginning of December. It was over sixteen years since a conference was held of all the Inspectors attached to the Department, and I am confident that it was of considerable benefit for the training and experience of the inspecting staff.

The value of a conference of this nature lies in the opportunities that it affords for combined consideration and the interchange of ideas in debatable and difficult points that arise in the performance of everyday duties, and in the fact that it creates an occasion for focusing general attention on anomalies and other matters requiring attention. I am firmly of the opinion that the value to the Audit Office of these conferences is such as to warrant their being held, at intervals, in the future.

I am pleased to be able to repeat the remarks which have appeared in previous reports with reference to the satisfactory manner in which the officers under my control have discharged their duties during the year. The measure of zeal and loyalty displayed by officers of the Audit Department has been most gratifying, and all are imbued with the aim to fit themselves for carrying out their duties to the best of their ability.

Owing to the specialized nature of the knowledge required by officers in connection with the work of the Audit Department it has been found that the most satisfactory arrangement is for them to commence their training as juniors in the Department, and it is proposed to follow this course whenever possible. It is sometimes a difficult problem to keep as large a staff of experienced officers as is desired, for there is a periodic loss as a result of officers leaving with the object of bettering their positions. As a branch of the Public Service the Audit Department has to be prepared to lose by transfer to other Departments the services of officers who by reason of their being transferred are able to gain promotion earlier than would otherwise be the case. Further, the services of officers who have gained a wide knowledge and experience as a result of their connection with the audit of the accounts of local authorities are often sought by local authorities, and quite a number of Audit officers have succeeded in obtaining positions with such bodies which carry greater remuneration and better prospects.

However, every endeavour is being made to have such a staff of trained officers that the Audit Office will be able at all times to cope with the increased work necessarily following on the extended activities of the Government.

I wish to place on record the fact that the various Government Departments have at all times readily met the requirements of the Audit Office, and I desire also to acknowledge the assistance freely given to me by the Crown Law Office in advising on the many intricate questions of law arising throughout the year.

J. H. FOWLER,

Controller and Auditor-General.

Audit Office, Wellington, 2nd August, 1938.