

INSPECTOR SCOTT, PALMERSTON NORTH DISTRICT.

On the 31st March, 1940, the strength of the Force in this district was fifty-eight, no increases or decreases having taken place during the year.

An increase of one sergeant and two constables at Palmerston North is absolutely necessary. The additional sergeant is required to exercise more supervision over the beat-duty constables, especially at night, and also to relieve other sergeants in the district when on annual leave. The two extra constables are required to enable an extension of the city beats to be made. The business area of the city has expanded considerably in recent years, and further police protection, especially at night, has become necessary.

One additional constable is also required at Marton. Since the station at Marton Junction was closed in 1933 the duty of attending passenger-trains and general inquiries in that locality has been carried out by the police from the Town of Marton, two miles away. Having regard to the ever-increasing number of general police inquiries and the greater number of trains (including troop-trains) which now have to be attended, the present members have difficulty in coping with the work, especially as one constable is fully employed on country inquiries and Bailiff's duties. Criminal statistics for Marton Police District for 1939 are more than 100 per cent. higher than those for the previous year.

The new police buildings at Palmerston North have been completed and occupied since the end of November last. The buildings are a credit to the Department and an asset to the city. The offices are spacious and well appointed, and the barrack accommodation for unmarried constables leaves nothing to be desired. Full consideration has also been given to those unfortunates who have to be confined in the lock-up, and every reasonable comfort and convenience consistent with their safety have been provided. These buildings should meet all requirements for many years to come. Great credit is due to those who prepared the original plans for the thoroughness with which every requirement was foreseen and provided for.

The offences return for the year ended the 31st December last shows a total of 2,377 offences reported, against 2,218 for the previous year, an increase of 159. Of the total number of offences reported, 2,194 were dealt with by arrest or summons.

The principal increases were in sexual offences, thefts, and breaches of the Gaming Acts and Motor-vehicles Act.

The principal decreases were in house and shop breaking, mischief, vagrancy, unlawful conversion of motor-vehicles, intoxication while in charge of motor-vehicles, and failing to maintain wives and children.

On the 26th April, 1939, a young woman was the victim of a serious assault near the Fitzherbert Bridge, being struck over the head with an iron bar with such force as to fracture her skull. Her assailant was subsequently arrested and, being found insane, was committed to a mental hospital.

Two constables were dealt with during the year for breaches of Police Regulations, otherwise the conduct of the Force has been excellent and a high standard of efficiency in both branches of the service maintained.

INSPECTOR SWEENEY, TEMPORARILY IN CHARGE OF WELLINGTON DISTRICT.

On the 31st March, 1940, the authorized strength of the district was 272 of all ranks, the actual strength being 262.

During the year the authorized strength was increased by the appointment of an additional constable at Miramar Station, and temporarily increased by thirty-one men of various ranks by the creation of a separate staff for duty at the Centennial Exhibition, composed of one Sub-Inspector, three sergeants, one detective sergeant, four detectives, and twenty-two constables.

I recommend that, when circumstances permit, Superintendent Lewin's recommendation in his annual report of last year in connection with an increase of strength in the district be given effect to—namely, that additional constables be appointed as under: Four to Central Station, two to Mount Cook, two to Taranaki Street, one to Kilbirnie, one to Petone, one to Lower Hutt, and one to Wellington South.

Offences reported during the year ended 31st December, 1939, numbered 8,158, compared with a total of 7,304 for the previous year, an increase of 854.

The chief increases were false pretences, assault, house or shop breaking, drunkenness, found on licensed premises, unlawful conversion of motor-cars, maintenance orders, and minor breaches of the Motor-vehicles Act.

Substantial decreases were shown in the case of reckless driving, attempted house-breaking, opium-smoking, and breaches of the Arms Act.

I am pleased to say that, despite a large influx of visitors to the Centennial Exhibition, the district has been almost free from serious crime throughout the year.

One charge of attempted murder was dealt with. This relates to an alleged attempt by one man to shoot another with a revolver. At the Supreme Court the accused was found guilty of causing bodily harm in circumstances that, if death had occurred, he would have been guilty of manslaughter.

On the whole the conduct of members of the Force in the district has been good, and a satisfactory standard of efficiency has been maintained by both branches of the Service.