

EXTRACTS FROM THE ANNUAL REPORTS OF OFFICERS IN CHARGE OF DISTRICTS.

INSPECTOR FOX, WHANGAREI DISTRICT.

The total authorized strength of all ranks at 31st March was forty-one, an increase of one constable (at Whangarei Station) since last annual report.

The appointment of a sergeant to Kaikohe Station is recommended. The work is increasing, and, as stated in my last annual report, a sergeant there would be available to exercise supervision over and conduct Court cases for the surrounding stations at Rawene, Ohaeawai, and Kawakawa.

The total number of offences reported during the year was 1,491, as against 1,577 last year, a decrease of 86. Arrests or summonses resulted in 1,415 cases, no action resulting in the remaining 76. Notable decreases are shown under the headings of theft, and breaking and entering. Unlawful carnal knowledge cases show an increase of 22, and supplying liquor to Natives an increase of 39. There were 74 convictions in the district during the year for the comparatively "new" offence of possession of liquor in the vicinity of dance-halls.

Under the heading of serious crime mention may be made of a case where a (male) Maori, age fifty-three years, was charged with attempted murder, attempted suicide, and assault. Following his unwelcome attentions to a young girl, she was running away from him when he discharged two shots from a rifle in her direction, but did not injure her. He then turned the rifle on himself and fired, causing serious injuries, but he recovered. On the attempted murder charge he was acquitted at the Supreme Court, but was convicted on each of the other charges.

General conduct of the police has been good, and the increasing duties, due to present conditions, are being cheerfully carried out. Two constables were fined for breaches of regulations.

I wish to refer to section 59 of the Statutes Amendment Act, 1939—the matter of intoxicating liquor at dances. The improvement in the general conduct at dances, brought about by this provision, has been very marked indeed in this district.

SUPERINTENDENT J. CUMMINGS, AUCKLAND DISTRICT.

On the 31st March last the actual strength of the Force was 328 of all ranks.

I recommend an increase of fifteen constables for the Central Station, two sergeants for Mount Eden, and a constable for Papakura. The increase of the strength at the Central Station would enable all the necessary relieving duty to be performed and allow for sickness and casualties. The appointment of two sergeants at Mount Eden Station would enable proper supervision to be given at night to that area. The time is fast approaching when a constable should be stationed at Sandringham, where a large number of State and other houses are being built. The appointment of an extra constable is necessary at Papakura on account of the increased traffic in the vicinity of the military mobilization camp there.

The Criminal Registration Branch continues to render valuable assistance.

The new station at Papakura is now occupied. A new station at St. Heliers is under construction and will soon be completed. A modern station is urgently required at Auckland Central, where the necessary land has been purchased. A new police-station is required at Mission Bay, a very popular and growing suburb. A new station is also required at Surfside, Waiheke Island, where a number of people are now in permanent residence. New buildings are also required at Howick and Whitianga, where the existing buildings are beyond repair.

Renovations and repairs were carried out at several stations during the year. A few more will require attention during the coming year.

The offences return for the year ended 31st December last shows a total of 11,477 as compared with 12,043 for the previous year, a decrease of 566. Of the total number reported, 10,610 were accounted for by arrest or summons.

The principal increases were in indecent assaults on males, incest, theft, robbery and aggravated robbery, arson, failing to maintain wife or children, sly-grog selling, supplying liquor to Natives in no-license areas, being in possession of liquor in vicinity of dance-halls, and breaches of Motor-vehicles Act.

There were decreases in unnatural offences, false statements and declarations, attempted suicide, assault with intent to commit crime, theft from dwellings, false pretences and obtaining credit by fraud, house or shop breaking, forgery and uttering, mischief, obscenity, vagrancy, assaulting or obstructing police, gaming offences, ship-desertion, permitting drunkenness, after hour trading on licensed premises, breach of prohibition orders, and drunkenness.

The additional patrols instituted during the year are to a large extent responsible for a marked reduction in the number of many of the offences referred to.

The following serious major crimes occurred during the year under review :—

(1) On the 18th May, 1940, a Hindu was found dead with severe head injuries in a creek at Huntly West. Inquiries were made, and the offender was promptly arrested and charged with the crime. He was convicted of causing actual bodily harm and sentenced to four years' hard labour.

(2) On the evening of the 1st October, 1940, five prisoners, one of whom was a convicted murderer, violently assaulted the warders on duty at Mount Eden Prison. One of the warders, an elderly man, was seriously injured, and he, with two other warders who were rendered unconscious, was removed to hospital. Four of the prisoners escaped. All the prisoners were recaptured, and the ring-leaders were sentenced to twelve years' hard labour and to receive a flogging. About one hundred members of the detective and uniform branches were continuously engaged in the search for the four prisoners who had escaped. A constant patrol was maintained in fast motor-cars equipped with wireless receiving-sets. The Auckland radio-stations co-operated in the search by broadcasting messages to the patrol cars. This enabled the search to be confined to the most likely area, and in this manner the maximum efficiency was obtained from the vehicles and men employed. The prisoners were eventually surrounded in rough country. The members of the Force worked long hours without complaint, and it was due to their energy and enthusiasm that the escapees were confined in the Auckland district and apprehended within one week after their sensational escape. The use of wireless in connection with the search for the missing prisoners brings into prominence the necessity for wireless being available to the police as in other countries, such as New South Wales, for example, where the system has proved an unqualified success.

The conduct of the police in the district has been satisfactory during the year. On account of the war the high standard of recruit could not be maintained. A number of temporary constables have been appointed, and they are giving satisfaction.