

There are many cases of hit-and-run motorists where little damage is done, which I suggest could be more conveniently dealt with in the Magistrates' Courts instead of in the Supreme Courts. As section 5 of the Motor-vehicles Amendment Act, 1936, is at present worded there is no alternative but to deal with the offence indictably. I would suggest that this section be amended by the repeal of subsection (3), and, instead, that similar provision be made to that set out in subsection (3) of section 2 of the Police Offences Amendment Act, 1927. This would enable offences to be dealt with summarily or indictably according to the gravity of the offence.

INSPECTOR McLEAN, GISBORNE DISTRICT.

There has been no increase or decrease in the authorized strength of the Force in the district during the past year.

The offences return for the year ended 31st December, 1940, shows a total of 1,643 offences reported, as compared with 1,755 the previous year, being a decrease of 112. Arrests and summonses resulted in 1,601 cases being dealt with, leaving 42 undetected. Of the cases dealt with, 85 were committed for trial or sentence, resulting in 81 convictions.

The most noticeable increases were petty theft, theft from dwellings, house or shop breaking, &c., drunkenness, and being found on licensed premises after closing-hours.

The principal decreases were illegally supplying liquor to Natives, breaches of prohibition orders, being intoxicated in charge of motor-vehicles, reckless or negligent driving, and other breaches of Motor-vehicles Act.

The only serious crime committed was that of a man who killed his male friend and then committed suicide (both Maoris). The accused, who was living with a woman as man and wife, was quarrelling with her while in his car, and struck her heavily with his open hand or with his fist. The friend endeavoured to protect the woman, and the accused picked up the starting-handle of the car and hit him on the head with it, killing him. He then dragged the woman and man out of the car and drove off. The murderer was later found dead, having shot himself with a shotgun.

The general conduct of members of the Force during the year has been very good, and their duties have been satisfactorily performed. There were no defaulters.

INSPECTOR CAMERON, NAPIER DISTRICT.

On the 31st March, 1941, the actual strength of the Force in this district was 67, this being the authorized strength. There has been no change since last return.

I recommend, as soon as circumstances permit, an increase of two constables at Hastings, one constable at Napier, and one constable at Wairoa. This would give more adequate supervision at night and also provide additional staff to cope with the work, which has increased considerably, particularly during the past year, as the result of the war.

For the year ended 31st December, 1940, the total number of offences reported was 1,743, a decrease from the previous year of 233. Of the offences reported, 1,593 were accounted for by arrests or summonses, leaving 150 undetected.

The principal increases were theft, false pretences, mischief, using indecent language, found on licensed premises after hours, and intoxication in charge of motor-vehicles.

The principal decreases were house or shop breaking, receiving stolen property, drunkenness, unlawful conversion of cars, reckless or negligent driving, and other breaches of the Motor-vehicles Act.

No serious crimes were committed during the year.

The conduct of members of the Force has been good. One constable was dealt with for breaches of Police Regulations, and was subsequently dismissed from the Force.

INSPECTOR SHANAHAN, NEW PLYMOUTH DISTRICT.

The actual strength of the Force in this district on the 31st March, 1941, was 50, being two constables below strength due to resignations. The early replacement of these two constables is necessary in order that the efficient performance of the duties of the Force, considerably increased due to war and other conditions, may be maintained.

The total number of offences reported during the year ended 31st December, 1940, was 1,087, as compared with 1,116 for the previous year, being a decrease of 29. Of offences reported, 1,072 were accounted for by arrest or summons.

The principal increases were indecent assault on males, procuring abortion, theft, false pretences, unlawfully using motor-cars, &c., offences under the Licensing Act, and being in possession of liquor in vicinity of dance-halls.

The principal decreases were unnatural offences, indecent assault, common assault, drunkenness, grossly indecent acts, and offences under the Motor-vehicles Act.

The conduct of the police has been good and the duties carried out in a very satisfactory manner.

There has been no serious crime in the district during the past year.

INSPECTOR DEMPSEY, WANGANUI DISTRICT.

The authorized strength of the Police district at 31st March, 1941, was 59. There was an increase of three constables during the year, due to the opening of a police-station at Waiouru Military Camp and the temporary transfer of two constables to Wanganui for war purposes.

The annual offences return for the year ended 31st December, 1940, showed a total of 1,567 offences reported during the year; the total is the same as for the previous year. Of the total of 1,567, 1,476 were accounted for.

Increases during the year include false pretences, drunkenness, being found on licensed premises after hours, breaches of provisions of Acts relating to the supply of liquor to Natives in Native licensing areas, and being in possession of liquor in the vicinity of dance-halls.

Decreases include theft, housebreaking, unlawful use of motor-vehicles, intoxication in charge of motor-vehicles, and breaches of the Destitute Persons Act.

On the 22nd September, 1940, at Manunui, a man was shot dead with a .22 calibre rifle by another man, following a dispute over possession of a house. At the Hamilton Supreme Court the accused was acquitted of murder, and, being found guilty of manslaughter, was sentenced to imprisonment for three months.

On the 27th December, 1940, at Pipiriki, a female Maori aged fourteen, and a male Maori aged twenty-three, were found dead on a bed with their throats cut. Investigation showed that the couple had been keeping company against the wish of the girl's guardian and had agreed to die together. It seems clear that the man murdered the girl and then committed suicide.