

GENERAL

Recruiting.—Owing to war conditions it has been necessary to strengthen the Force at the principal ports and other vital points. It has been difficult to obtain satisfactory recruits. I have found it necessary to relax the regulations considerably and take on men above the maximum age (thirty years) in normal conditions. I have also had to accept men much below the standard of education and physique adopted prior to the war. The men taken on during the past year have had no special training in the training school, but they are given weekly lectures and are coached and supervised by the sectional sergeants under whom they are directly serving. Considering the fact that they have not received the usual training, I am pleased to report that, with a few exceptions, the men have done exceedingly well. I am still 24 men short of the authorized strength of the Force. A short time ago the numerical strength was well down, but with assistance from the Army Department, which has released some men to me, it is gradually picking up. The Department has now taken over some vital points hitherto guarded by the Army. Quite a number of our permanent staff applied for permission to join the armed Services, but it was not possible to grant them permission, as it meant depriving this Department of the services of trained personnel, of which we are very short now. The service is carrying on with a very large number of untrained men. All branches of the service have worked very harmoniously.

Efficiency.—Considering the very large number of men in the Force with little training and short service, the standard of efficiency is very high. A great deal of hard work has fallen on the shoulders of the experienced personnel, who have responded admirably, working very long hours at times and with a great measure of success.

Conduct of the Police.—The general conduct of the police, with a few exceptions, has been very satisfactory.

Offences.—Some very serious crimes were committed during the year. With the exception of a few cases, all have been detected. There has been a noticeable reduction in the number of cases of drunkenness during the year, the decrease being 38 per cent. on the figures for the previous year.

Transport.—Our efficiency in this respect has been well maintained, notwithstanding the difficulty in acquiring tires for the cars of men in charge of country districts and headquarter stations outside the four centres, where we have our own fleet of cars. Unless the Department is given more consideration in the matter of allocation of tires, it will be impossible for the Department to give the service required of it. In view of the enormous number of calls on the police, it is essential we have at least efficient transport for the carrying-out of all duties cast upon us, particularly where crime is concerned and the visiting of vital points throughout the country.

Buildings.—Little progress was made during the year with the erection of new buildings, especially in the country districts, owing to the calls on all skilled tradesmen for Army purposes. Good progress, however, was made in improving and modernizing old buildings, particularly at some of the centres. Many improvements were made throughout the Dominion to various stations and dwellings. Many more are awaiting attention as soon as tradesmen are available to do the work. The repairs have been authorized, but the difficulty is to get the work done. I have submitted a special report on the question of housing.

Aliens.—Alien registration and control continue to form one of the principal items of the extra duties devolving upon the police in consequence of the war. This duty is of a continuous nature, and does not terminate at registration. A close watch is being kept upon the conduct of all aliens, and any untoward incident is promptly investigated. A special staff is maintained for this purpose so that the investigation is carried out by experienced members of the Force. The work is controlled from and all the information co-ordinated at Head Office.

War Activities.—In addition to the supervision of wharves, shipping, and the many vital points throughout New Zealand, a great deal of time is given to the three armed Services and the National Service Department in the nature of inquiries, which have increased considerably. Military and National Service defaulters and conscientious objectors also take up a lot of time in inquiries and the escorting of them to various camps and prisons.

Breaches of the Oil Fuel Regulations are fairly numerous and cause much extra work in respect of inquiries and prosecutions, as also do breaches of the Censorship and other Emergency Regulations.

Additional Staff required.—In order to deal more efficiently with the additional work cast upon us by the expansion of some districts and suburban areas adjacent to the cities, I beg to ask for authority for 3 additional sergeants and 13 constables at an annual cost of £6,375, the amount required for this financial year being £4,780.

D. J. CUMMINGS, Commissioner of Police.