

The death-rate was the lowest since 1936, when these statistics were first compiled. Over the past thirteen years there has been a steady reduction in the number of shooting accidents, and it is reasonable to assume that the work of the Arms Bureau, by public and private lectures, demonstrations, press publicity, and use of the National Film Unit's film, has contributed substantially to this improvement in the position.

As usual, nearly every accident has been due to a lack of proper care in the use of firearms, or to a sense of false security where the mechanism has been unsafe. In the majority of the reported accidents the hammer-shot gun and the .22 rifle have been concerned.

*Work for other Government Departments.*—As in the past, the Police Department has been called on to carry out a large volume of inquiry and other work for various Government Departments, and a good deal of the time of the police is taken up with these duties, which include also the conduct of prosecutions for breaches of statutes and regulations administered by other Departments. In view of the increase in work that is not of a criminal nature, sent by other Departments to be investigated by the police, the time has now arrived when these Departments should do their own inquiries and thus relieve the police of a considerable volume of work which retards their investigation of serious crime.

*Criminal Registration Branch.*—At headquarters on the 31st March, 1949, the finger-impressions of 74,224 persons were on record. During the year 4,213 sets were received, classified, indexed, and filed; 267 persons were identified as previous offenders who, had it not been for the finger-print system, would have passed as first offenders; 6,641 photographs of 3,014 persons (6,486 photographs) were received and dealt with, 804 photographs were reproduced in the *Police Gazette*; 12 wanted persons were located; and 1 unknown deceased person identified by finger-prints.

The finger-prints left by offenders committing 52 crimes were identified as belonging to 36 persons.

Finger-prints of 188 persons were received from other countries for inquiry, of which 16 were identified as those of persons previously convicted in New Zealand. The finger-prints of 769 New Zealand offenders were sent overseas for inquiry, 130 offenders being identified as having been previously convicted outside this Dominion.

The finger-prints of all ship deserters have been sent to the country of the deserter's origin, and it was found that 84 (approximately 12 per cent.) had been previously convicted overseas.

A start has been made to bring all the criminal histories of persons on record completely up to date, and 702 new criminal record cards have been made out of the more persistent offenders. It will take several years to complete this work, but when it is finished it will enable the full record of any offender to be produced at a moment's notice.

Use is now being made of the radio transmission of finger-prints between Commonwealth countries by a method evolved by New Scotland Yard. By this means positive identification can be made and advice of the offender's antecedents received within twenty-four hours of sending the prints to England.

In conjunction with the Arms Bureau, various photographs and lantern slides were prepared to be used when lecturing new recruits to the Force.

On the 31st March, 1949, the finger-print collection in Auckland totalled 13,450 sets.

During the year 1,157 sets of prisoners' finger-prints were received, duly classified, searched, and filed.

The photographs of 351 prisoners were taken, and 1,755 prints were taken from negatives, as well as numerous photographs of scenes of crimes and of motor accidents. The total number of photographs produced by the Branch during the year was 2,729.

In 29 cases offenders were traced by their finger-prints, and in 25 other cases prints left by offenders when committing crimes were identified and the offenders duly arrested and dealt with by the Courts.