

The Maori rate was 1.82 per 1,000 live births (2.21 in 1947). This is the lowest rate so far recorded. The combined rate was 1.30 per 1,000 live births.

The Maori rate has varied considerably from year to year during the past ten years, but with a definite downward trend. In 1939 it was 4.62.

Maternal-mortality rates (European, Maori, and combined) for the years 1939-48 are shown in a table elsewhere in this report, and further particulars regarding morbidity and mortality are given in the divisional report.

INFECTIOUS AND OTHER DISEASES

Notes on the notifiable infectious diseases will be found in the report of the Director of the Division of Public Hygiene, which also deals with the activities of the Department under the Food and Drugs Act, the Social Hygiene Act, the Poisons Act, and the Dangerous Drugs Act.

The main items of interest with regard to infectious diseases were the low incidence of diphtheria during the year, and the continuance unabated of the epidemic of poliomyelitis.

New Zealand was given publicity in the first post-war report of the Permanent Opium Control Board because of the high consumption of heroin in this country. This increasing consumption was noted in the annual reports of 1947 and 1948, and action had already been taken to exercise more control. That the action taken has resulted in an improvement of the position will be seen by perusal of the report of the Director of Public Hygiene but the full effects of such action are not yet apparent.

Tuberculosis.—The report of the Director of the Division of Tuberculosis indicates the progress that has been made over the past few years.

With the coming into force of the Tuberculosis Act, 1948, still further advances in combating this disease will be possible, but under present conditions the provision of more sanatorium beds is difficult and some delay is inevitable. Sites for new sanatoria, one at Hamilton and one at Levin, have been selected, and the provision of buildings will be proceeded with as quickly as circumstances permit.

There has been a marked improvement in the tuberculosis death-rate during the past fifty years. The accompanying table shows the improvement which has taken place in the number of deaths, the crude death-rate, and the standardized death-rate for the sexes separately and combined for all forms of tuberculosis and for tuberculosis of the respiratory system. The figures and rates given refer to the European section of the community.

Tuberculosis takes a much greater toll of the Maori race, but the figures for the past ten years, given later in this report, and the report of the Divisional Director indicate that definite progress is being made.