

that the treatment of infectious cases might be put once for all on a sound basis. As the Act necessitates the calling on each local authority to provide for infectious diseases, Dr. Mason on his visit in April called together the bodies concerned (some fifty-two in number), and explained the necessities of the case to them. He showed how it was possible to combine them for the purpose of building the hospital, and induced all the representatives present to agree unanimously to the proposal. A sub-committee to select a site, draw up plans, &c., was appointed, and they agreed to leave the matter in the hands of the Department. A suitable site has now been acquired, plans are in preparation, and practically all the local bodies have assented to combine voluntarily and save the necessity for compulsion. We shall now have a thorough reform in the whole question of infectious cases—from special accommodation for dangerous cases to disinfection of clothing and proper conveyances for patients. I have lingered somewhat on this subject on account of its being the one far-reaching advance I have to record, and it seems to me to indicate the line on which other necessary reforms should be modelled.

Infectious-disease Hospital at Rotorua.

A small building has been taken over and converted into an isolated ward, in which cases can be placed prior to their removal to Hamilton District Hospital, where a special ward exists. Two rooms were specially lined and painted to permit of disinfection being thorough; the building was put in repair, and then handed over to the Town Board to administer. They have appointed a caretaker, and the building is now ready for use when necessity arises. The need for it was great, as the hotels and boardinghouses naturally refused to take in infectious cases, which now can be quickly removed from the township and receive proper attention.

A Special Wagon

for the conveyance by rail of infectious diseases has been constructed by the Railway Department, and is now complete. It is specially lined and painted, and floored with lead, so that thorough disinfection can be carried out. A closet with a closed pan is attached, and a stretcher with a spring mattress. I believe it will prove comfortable, and will be of great value. Should it be thought possible to supplement this with a small steam disinfector—such as Thresh's or Beck's—mounted on a truck, so that it could be conveyed to various stations on the line where necessity might arise, we should have a very satisfactory equipment for dealing with infection in country districts.

ADMINISTRATION OF PUBLIC HEALTH ACT.

While the Act of 1900 is in many ways in advance of previous Acts, and those of England, I respectfully beg to bring to your notice one or two difficulties which I have met with.

The Combination of Local Bodies for a specific purpose, though provided for in three ways, presents certain obstacles. Under the interpretation clause the Governor in Council can declare districts combined, but the administration has been placed in the hands of one of the local authorities. This is sufficient to prevent the others agreeing to be so combined, and thus one would require to use compulsion. A combination under section 60, by order of the Stipendiary Magistrate, only applies to drainage and hospitals. Further, in large schemes involving large outlay the Magistrate might not feel called on to act as arbitrator. Finally, the clause under the head "Public Works" permits of a combination only under mutual agreement. In dealing with small local bodies, each jealous of the other, and determined to evade as far as it can its share of expense, a mutual agreement seems hopeless.

As my district is subdivided into so many of these small bodies, I despair of getting any work done which necessitates from its extent and importance their co-operation. Some wider power placed in the hands of the Chief Health Officer to compel a combination of districts would be of the utmost service.

Machinery for administering the Act.—In recommending work to be done one is often at a loss owing to the technical details which require the opinion of an engineer. Could one form an idea as to the cost and practicability of certain schemes, one's hands would be greatly strengthened when approaching the local bodies; and, again, should occasion arise for the use of the compulsory clauses of the Act and in carrying out work on this behalf, it would be of great assistance were there a Consulting Engineer for the Department from whom one could seek advice. On legal points, too, it would be equally desirable to have a general permission to refer to the Crown Solicitor. At present, when proceedings have to be taken against persons who offend against the Act, it has to be done by the local body, which has to be worked up to the right pitch—a wearisome business at all times; and probably some fault in serving the requisition is discovered at the last, and the process has to be begun over again. Thus valuable time is lost. It would prove more satisfactory had I at command all the machinery necessary to take such actions under section 27—at least, where small Road and Town Boards are concerned. Further, owing to the size of the district, it is impossible to keep in touch with the various works, regarding which requisitions on owners and occupiers have been served. Could one command the services of the police in country districts to take such action on the recommendation of the District Health Officer a great advance would be made, and it would save the appearance of weakness in administration which the present system permits when one learns a month or two after visiting a district that the work recommended remains neglected. Were each district constable an Inspector under the Act all this would be avoided. It is impossible at present to enforce the provisions of the Act systematically, and when once it is discovered that no penalty follows when default is made it is useless to continue making recommendations.

I gladly take this opportunity to recognise the intelligent assistance I have received from the police all through the district, and the hearty co-operation of Inspector Cullen in particular in any case where it was possible for him to give it—it leads one to wish that the Act permitted more