

the drafting of an Act to apply to the combination of Hospital Boards generally for such purposes, and it is to be hoped that this Act will be passed early in the coming session, so that the combination of the Hospital Boards can be established on a proper basis.

Infectious-disease Hospitals.

The erection of the Infectious-disease Hospital in Timaru was completed during the year, and has recently been made use of for the first time by two cases of scarlet fever.

GENERAL SANITATION OF THE DISTRICT.

Christchurch.

Water-supply.—No further steps have been taken to bring the matter of a general water-supply before the public again. The Sydenham water-supply is now complete, and numerous connections have been made throughout the district.

Drainage.—As a result of the matter of the extension of sewers having been approved of by the City Council, the Drainage Board took steps to have powers granted them by further legislation for raising a loan without obtaining the consent of the ratepayers. This, however, did not meet with the approval of the House, and the Bill when passed made it necessary for the Board to take a poll before obtaining any further loans. In January a poll was taken of the ratepayers on the proposal to borrow £50,000 for the purpose of extending the sewers and increasing the plant at the pumping-station. The result was, that the poll was carried by an absolute majority of six; but as the provisions of the Act for some reason or other provide that only a three-fifths majority could carry the poll, the poll was lost. Of the 7,800 ratepayers on the roll only 550 voted, thus showing the small interest taken in such matters by the ordinary citizen. The defeat of the proposal at the poll was put down to the public being ignorant of the necessity of the proposed works. The newspapers took the matter up and impressed on the public the terrible state of affairs that would ensue if the present pumping machinery should be at any time insufficient to cope with the work. The Drainage Board was encouraged to take another poll, and this time they decided to ask for authority to raise £100,000. This poll was carried by an absolute majority of 750, which gave a good majority over the three-fifths majority required by the Act. Even on this second poll, however, only 1,320 votes were recorded out of a possible total of 7,800. The carrying of this poll makes it possible that within about five years every house that can be connected with the drainage system when extended will be so connected. Unfortunately, owing to the absence of a public water-supply, the connections will in most cases be only for the carrying of slops, and the present barbarous method of removal of nightsoil will continue. During the last year 588 water-closets have been installed, as compared with 578 last year. Owing to the dual control exercised by the City Council and the Drainage Board, there is no machinery for enforcing the putting-in of good plumbing-work in new houses that cannot at present connect with the sewer. It is hoped to remedy this during the current year by adopting the plumbing specifications and by-laws of the Drainage Board, and arranging for the proper inspection of these fittings.

A special inspection of the lodginghouses of the city was made by Inspectors Kershaw and McKenzie, and the report sent to the City Council. The condition of these lodginghouses was on the whole very satisfactory.

A special inspection of the sanitary accommodation provided at the public halls and places of amusement licensed by the City Council was made by Inspector Kershaw. The report, which was sent to the City Council, revealed that the accommodation provided was very unsatisfactory in a number of cases, and especially in those places most frequented by the public. It is difficult to fix on an arbitrary standard of the number of conveniences that should be provided for each sex in proportion to the number that can be accommodated in the building, as, owing to the various uses to which these places are sometimes put, each case must be considered on its merits. On the whole, however, the present arrangements are distinctly deficient. No steps appear to have been taken to remedy these deficiencies.

A special inquiry was made by Inspector Kershaw into the source, means of transit, and general conditions of the fish-supply of Christchurch, and the report was sent to the City Council. The following were the main features of the report: That the chief sources of supply are Moeraki and Port Chalmers, and that there is unnecessary delay in the conveyance of fish from these places to Christchurch, the fish generally being from two days and a half to three days old before being consumed. The means of packing are defective. To improve the conditions of the fish-supply there are required suitable provision for storage of fish at Port Chalmers and Moeraki; a suitably constructed van and quicker transit by rail; earlier fish-sales, so that the fish may be available for the consumer earlier; amendment to the Municipal Corporations Act to enable the City Council to establish a municipal fish-market; and restrictions as to the freezing of fish.

This is a matter that comes up for discussion frequently at intervals of a year or so; but so far the report has not, I believe, been considered, and no steps have been taken by the City Council to improve matters.

Christchurch Suburbs (Borough of Woolston, Road Boards of Avon, Riccarton, Heathcote, and Spreydon).

In November a poll was taken in Woolston on the proposal to borrow £20,000 for the purpose of carrying out various improvements, the most important of which is over 2,000 chains of concrete channelling. This poll was carried by one vote. The present condition of the side channels in Woolston is exceedingly bad, and the work of putting in proper side channels has been delayed far too long.

The removal of nightsoil in the suburbs, which was made compulsory by by-laws last year, has come into universal operation, and has been satisfactorily carried out.