

Short of the ideal system being adopted, it would be a great improvement if all milk had to be brought to a depot or depots in the chief towns, under proper control, from whence it could be more economically distributed. The milk brought to the depot could be paid for on the butter-fat test, which would do away with all inducement to adulterate. At present adulteration has been proved to be very prevalent in Christchurch, and probably exists elsewhere. If after a lot of trouble a conviction is obtained the offender is fined about £5, and he makes up the amount of his fine by the amount of water he puts in the next morning. Unless the maximum penalty is always inflicted this adulteration will not be stopped. It is significant that when a milk-supplier has been fined for adulteration it apparently makes no difference to his custom.

In effecting such large alterations in existing methods, doubtless unforeseen difficulties would crop up; but it is to be hoped that some municipality will make a practical experiment in this direction. It is satisfactory to learn that the Christchurch City Council has set up a committee to go into the matter of the improvement of the milk-supply, and it is to be hoped that there will be a practical result of the efforts of this committee.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF DISTRICT HEALTH OFFICERS.

It cannot be said that the responsibilities which the general public suppose to rest on the District Health Officer at all correspond with his powers. A large amount of work, such as the milk and meat supply, the sanitation of schools, factories, and hotels, for which in other countries the District Health Officer would be responsible, is in the hands of other Government Departments and local authorities; and at what point the District Health Officer assumes responsibility has been and is veiled in mystery. A school or factory may be built with defective ventilation or sanitary accommodation: if the defects are sufficient to give rise to complaint, the matter may be referred to the District Health Officer; and often structural alterations that might have been easily made in planning the building are now practically impossible. This is only one instance, and an actual instance of what is constantly occurring. The Health Officer is more often called in to cure an evil that might have been prevented than asked how to prevent the evil from occurring; and even if he is consulted he has no power to insist on his advice being followed, he can only wait and see whether neglect to follow his advice causes an actual offence under the Public Health Act.

INSPECTOR'S WORK.

The following reports from Inspectors Kershaw and McKenzie will show that a large amount of routine work has been carried out effectively and without friction. Inspector Kershaw has been chiefly confined to the larger towns in the district, and Inspector McKenzie has had most of the country inspections.

HUGH E. FINCH, M.B., D.P.H.,
District Health Officer.

Dr. Finch, District Health Officer.

I HAVE the honour to report as follows regarding my work during the year ending the 31st March, 1906.

Early in the year a number of cases of infectious diseases were reported in and about the Borough of Oamaru; each case was investigated and precautions taken to prevent the spread of infection.

I have also inspected during my weekly visits the plumbing and drainage work done in connection with the installation of sanitary fittings, and in accordance with the requirements of the by-laws notified plumbers and drain-connectors to take out licenses. Several applications have been sent in, and licenses will be issued upon applicants proving their fitness to hold them.

In Timaru inspections of a general character were made, several visits being made to the Infectious-diseases Hospital in connection with the drainage and plumbing arrangements. The drains were water-tested in my presence before being covered in. The lack of plumbing and drainage by-laws in this borough has hampered the putting-in of sanitary arrangements up to modern standards, but this defect will no doubt soon be remedied.

As indicated in the summary of inspections attached, much time was given to the inquiries and inspections necessary in the compilation of the special reports on the licensed public halls, licensed and private boardinghouses, and the fish-supply and shops in the City of Christchurch.

A number of complaints in and about the city were investigated, and in certain cases requisitions were served which were duly complied with.

Inspections of the drainage systems of Lyttelton and Temuka were made, and special reports submitted thereon.

PLUMBING CLASSES.

Classes have been conducted regularly throughout the year in Timaru and Oamaru. The average number of students attending each class is twelve. Much useful work has been done, and evidence of the benefit of the classes is to be seen in the improved plumbing-work being done in these boroughs. Several students of the Timaru class are to sit for the City Guilds of London Examination at an early date, and local examinations will be arranged in both boroughs at the completion of the course of instruction.

SUMMARY OF INSPECTIONS.

Infectious-disease outbreaks investigated, 3; infectious-disease investigations, 61; houses disinfected, 10; schools disinfected, 1; offensive trades inspected, 12; bakehouses inspected, 14; pickle-factory inspected, 1; part shipment fruit condemned, 1; Complaints investigated, 29; requisitions served, 9; requisitions complied with, 9; prosecutions, 1; water-samples taken, 10.