

Inspector Schauer and ten Inspectors, when, at the same time, as will be seen, we have had to cope with a regrettable large increase in the number of notifiable infectious diseases.

Consequent upon these changes, however, the rearrangement of Inspectors' districts has been little altered, with the exception of Wellington and suburbs. Inspector Gardiner, at Stratford, ministers to the wants of the Taranaki District, Inspector Sargeant is stationed at Wanganui, and Inspector Wilson at Marton. Inspector O'Brien, at Feilding, attends to a widened district, extending to Otaki. Inspector Hickes takes, at Pahiatua, the place of Inspector Dorizac, who has been transferred to Nelson, while Inspector Miller, at Greytown, attends to the South Wairarapa District. Notwithstanding the exceptional reduction of inspectorial aid, thanks to the tact and keenness exhibited by these Inspectors in their work, and to their unanimous and unfailing willingness to seek and follow the further advice I could give, I am able to put on record an expression of satisfaction with the general outcome for the year in their respective localities.

To Inspector Gray is unavoidably left the almost impossible task of coping single-handed with the wants of Wellington City and district. The disinfection of premises and things in the city is now being performed by its own officer (Mr. Pasley), who was trained to the work in this office. There is left, nevertheless, a large amount of work which the Department is expected to undertake, and this, I am satisfied, cannot be adequately dealt with by one Inspector, more especially if anything like systematic and sufficient effort is to be made to fairly administer the provisions of "The Sale of Food and Drugs Act, 1907."

The clerical work at this office has greatly increased during the year. You have supported my recommendation that a clerical cadet be appointed; there still remains the need for additional aid in typewriting. Even with Miss Martelli's speed and ability, a certain amount of work often remains for another day. It is to be remembered that there is but one typist for the Bacteriological and District Offices. A rearrangement of the office files has had my attention, and with the adoption of the card-index system, and its efficient control by Mr. Stratford, much convenience and agreeable accuracy have been obtained.

It remains to add that, under Mr. Steward's careful and energetic supervision, the clerical work has been carried out with that customary efficiency which has so well merited the appreciation of my predecessors in this office.

VITAL STATISTICS.

Birth-rate.

The birth-rate for Wellington during the year 1907 was 27·34 per 1,000 of population. This is higher than for the year 1906, which was 27·26, but is lower than that for 1905—viz., 29·72.

The average in the four centres for 1907 was 27·61.

Death-rate.

The death-rate for Wellington City, and the city, including suburbs, during 1907, shows a marked increase on that of 1906, and is higher than the percentage recorded during the last four years in the case of the city itself, or during the last three years in the city, including suburbs, as the following table shows:—

Death-rate for the Whole of the Dominion, per 1,000 Population.

				Wellington City.	Wellington and Suburbs.	Average of Four Centres including Suburbs.
1903	...	...	...	11·30	10·93	11·73
1904	...	...	...	10·75	10·43	10·73
1905	...	...	...	10·55	10·21	10·42
1906	...	...	...	9·45	9·19	10·35
1907	...	...	...	11·45	11·28	12·18
Mean for five years				10·70	10·40	11·08

The increase in the death-rate this year is chiefly due to the advance of infant-mortality, and is doubtless to be accounted for by the large increase in the zymotic-disease rate. This sudden and marked rise in the death-rate is far from comforting, in view of the steady decline up to this since 1902. Some consolation may be reaped from the fact that in 1902 the figure was 12·58.

The two following tables give the death-rate extending over the last five years:—

Death-rate excluding Children under One Year.

					Wellington and Suburbs.	Average of Four Centres.
1903	...	...	...	...	8·27	9·14
1904	...	...	...	...	7·89	8·30
1905	...	...	...	...	7·38	8·02
1906	...	...	...	...	7·23	8·35
1907	...	...	...	...	8·06	9·23
Mean for five years				...	7·76	8·60