

WEST COAST—SOUTH ISLAND.

Department of Public Health, Greymouth, March, 1908.

Memorandum for the Chief Health Officer, Wellington.

ANNUAL REPORT.

As you are aware, my duties here commenced on the 16th October, 1907, having previously been located in Hamilton.

On first arriving here much of my time was occupied in preliminarily investigating my localities. So far, I may say that, owing to the climatic conditions, country work cannot be attended to as I should like, and further, I have to say that there are some infectious-diseases cases reported here that are really too far away, and would incur a large amount of expense owing to the difficulty in reaching the localities. Most of these are pulmonary tuberculosis, and where I cannot visit I send full instructions to the householder of how to prevent the spread of the disease, &c.

Preliminary investigations show that a large amount of work requires to be done right throughout the whole district—namely, Buller, Westland, Inangahua, and Grey Counties. However, I hope to see matters greatly improved upon in my next report to you, by persuading these local authorities to bring about better sanitary conditions of their various localities. It is my intention to attend some of their meetings, and to point out to them the need for adding to their present by-laws, for, although some of the clauses are modern, there are many items missing that should have been inserted. Apparently these by-laws have been taken from copies of those of the Wellington City Council, with the idea that “these are good enough for what we want.” Here lies the danger of copying a few sections from by-laws of a large city, instead of having a complete set which will suffice for the present and future requirements of the existing town for which they are intended. I here mention a few of the sanitary improvements required, and which ought to have been noticed when the last by-laws for these towns were made in 1900, as the by-laws (from which I presume these were copied) contained all the necessary clauses.

- (a.) There is no provision for drain-ventilation except where there is a W.C., and then only by the 2 in. anti-siphon pipe.
- (b.) No fresh-air inlets to drains.
- (c.) No inspection pipes or chambers.
- (d.) Disconnecting-traps (and only in some house-drains) are the ordinary bent siphon.
- (e.) Gully-traps are of the large type, and hold too much sewage.
- (f.) Drains are never tested.
- (g.) Urinal supply-pipes are directly connected to the drinking-water mains.
- (h.) Sinks, &c., are not trapped in a large majority of cases, although the by-laws require it.
- (i.) Ordinary seamed pipe (galvanised iron sheet) is used for waste-pipes in most cases.
- (j.) Lavatory wastes are directly connected to soilpipes in new work (prohibited by by-laws). The lavatories, &c., are trapped, but not anti-siphoned.
- (k.) Stables are not paved, properly drained, or provided in any way with manure-receptacles of a non-absorbent nature.
- (l.) Pig-feed is collected and carted in wooden tubs without covers.
- (m.) Plans of drainage are not asked for by the Council.

There are other things which might be quoted, but this is sufficient to show cause for a revolution in sanitary work throughout.

Disinfection.

Throughout the district the representatives of the various local authorities have been consulted *re* purchasing appliances and material. Reefton readily complied with my request. Westport has done so recently, also Buller County. Kumara and Hokitika are holding matters over. Ross is doing the same. I have had no replies from the Westland or Grey Counties in the matter.

Infectious Diseases.

Very few of these have been reported, most of them coming from the Inangahua County, and all places which have been in contact with same have been disinfected.

Visits of Inspection.

The following townships have been visited: Ross, Ruatapu, Lake Mahinapua, Hokitika, Karoro, Nelson Creek, Kumara, Kaiata, Dobson, Wallsend, Brunner, Ngahere, Blackball, Totara Flat, Ikamatua, Hukarere, Waimaunga, Taipoiti, Reefton, Globe Hill, Cruxington, Black's Point, Caplestone, Dillman's, Kanieri, Rimu, Westport, Granity, Millerton, Ngakawau, Nikau, St. Helens, Cobden, Camp, Runanga, and Progress Junction.

Dilapidated Buildings.

These have been reported on in Westport, Greymouth, Hokitika, and Ross. Two of the worst buildings in Greymouth have been removed, the owners having done this on their own account after a report had been sent in to the Borough Council on a number of the most dilapidated places.

A return of work for the past five months is herewith attached, but it does not give minor details, as many places have been revisited for the same purpose.

The press letter-book records 270 pages of memo.s, letters, and reports throughout the district.

E. MIDDLETON, M.R.S.I. Sc. Lond.,
Inspector.