

GENERAL.

The old regulations, which had been in force in the Department for upwards of a quarter of a century, and which had become quite obsolete, were replaced by a new set which took effect from the 1st of last March. The present Police Force Act, which was passed in 1886, is also obsolete, and should be replaced by a new and up-to-date one.

A new scale of pay was devised, which came into force on the 1st of April, being the completion of a scheme which was initiated by my predecessor.

A new style of uniform has also been introduced, which gives a smarter appearance to the wearer than the old style did. Blue and white helmets replace the shako, which was neither useful nor ornamental as a head-dress.

The connection of police-stations with the telephone-system has been extended, the number of stations in which the telephone is installed having been increased by 24 during the year. The linking-up of police-stations with the telephone bureaux, especially in the remoter districts, is a great advantage to both settlers and the police in getting police matters attended to expeditiously.

Considerable advantage is also derived from the use of bicycles in the performance of police duty. There are about 180 members of the Force who use their own bicycles on duty and who are granted an allowance for the same. By this arrangement the mobility and efficiency of the Force is considerably increased in city and suburban districts, and in the country where the roads are well graded and metalled.

During the year a strike took place among the men employed in the gold-mining industry at Waihi and Waikino, which necessitated over 80 members of the Force being drafted there from various parts of the Dominion to protect life and property and keep order as between the strikers and free labourers who came to fill the places vacated by the former. The police, during the five or six months they were on special duty at Waihi, had to perform very harassing duty, and were subjected to gross insults and abuse from the strikers and their womenfolk, yet, notwithstanding the irksome duties the men had to perform and the abuse and insults levelled at them, not a solitary case of misconduct was reported against any member of the Force. The tact and forbearance exercised by the police enabled them at all times to maintain a complete mastery of the situation at Waihi, and I have no hesitation in stating that they proved themselves to be a body of men that the Dominion should be proud of.

Owing to a strike having occurred among the coal-miners at Huntly, a detachment of police had to be sent there for a few weeks, but, as very little disturbance took place and the men returned to work, the police were soon withdrawn.

The steady increase in population throughout the Dominion and the consequent increase in police work is causing a constant demand from the public and from the police officers in charge of districts for more police in the city and suburban areas as well as in the country towns and more remote country districts. These demands cannot, however, be granted till such time as a substantial numerical increase to the present strength of the Force has been authorized. The taking-over of the control of the street traffic in certain localities also calls for an increase in the number of the police in those places. The Auckland Exhibition, which opens on the 1st December next, will also cause a demand for extra police in Auckland City and at the Exhibition itself, which must be complied with.

It is to be hoped that when the numerical strength of the Force is increased it will be found possible—without lessening the police protection of the streets—to deal liberally with the requests of police constables for more regular Sunday leave, and for time off in lieu of time spent by them in attending Court when off duty, than they at present receive. Definite instructions have already been issued that these concessions must be given whenever possible.

To meet all these demands for extra police would entail an increase of fully 100 men to the present authorized strength, but as this would involve an additional sum of £17,000 to the cost of the Department, I cannot ask that such a large increase be made in any one year. I am, however, reluctantly compelled to ask for an increase this year of 30 constables to the present authorized strength of the Force.

For very many years the police have been performing work for other Government Departments that does not come within the scope of ordinary police duties; and year by year the work so performed has increased in volume and variety, with the result that the police, while attending to these extraneous duties, have to be withdrawn from, or to neglect, their own duties to a certain extent, which means a loss of efficiency in the service, while the Departments for which the work has been performed thereby gain in efficiency and economy at the expense of this service. I think the time has now arrived when the question should be considered as to whether those Departments which make such free use of the police should not have to pay a specified annual amount for the services rendered. As this Department has to pay for all services rendered to it by other Departments, it is only reasonable to expect that it should receive some remuneration for the services it renders to other Departments.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS IN CHARGE OF DISTRICTS.

Extracts from the annual reports of the officers in charge of districts are hereto annexed.

J. CULLEN,

Commissioner of Police.