

The Medical Inspectors have shown great enthusiasm and energy in carrying out their duties. That their efforts are highly appreciated is shown from the fact that from 60 to 75 per cent. of the cases reported by the Medical Inspectors have been attended to by the parents by their obtaining the necessary medical or dental treatment for their children. Comparison with the results noted in previous years shows that the percentage of cases treated as a result of reports by Medical Inspectors is steadily increasing. In New Zealand the chief requirement in connection with the medical and dental treatment seems to be the provision of adequate facilities at a reasonable cost in country areas where such facilities are at present largely non-existent. To meet this need it will be necessary first of all to increase further the staff of school Medical Inspectors, so as to be able to cover the whole ground more rapidly and to pay repeated visits where necessary. It will also be necessary to make provision for school dentists to visit outlying localities so as to treat children at their own school for a very moderate charge. Plans have already been made for providing such facilities, but it has been found impossible to obtain the services of suitable dentists owing to the stress of war conditions.

Some arrangement will also need to be made for placing the services of medical men more easily within the reach of residents in outlying districts. This provision is needed not only for the treatment of school-children, but for the benefit of the adults of the localities referred to. The nationalization of the medical services of the Dominion, with the consequent more even distribution of medical men, would be one way of, to some extent, meeting the needs of the case. It is quite possible that in some cases it would be necessary to provide dental and medical treatment free, and under certain circumstances this should be done. Provided, however, that the services of medical and dental practitioners are placed easily within the reach of all parents at a moderate cost, it seems desirable from every point of view that parents should accept the responsibility of caring for the health of their children. From the results already noticed in New Zealand it is gratifying to find that parents in the Dominion gladly accept this responsibility. In most cases where Medical Inspectors have had to report unfavourably on the clothing or nutrition of children it has been found that defects have been due more to ignorance or want of supervision on the part of the parents than to necessitous circumstances, and, as has been stated, a confidential report from the Medical Inspector generally has the desired effect.

In order to assist parents in this important work the Department has secured the services of ten highly qualified school nurses. The nurses are present during the medical inspection of the children and have pointed out to them by the Medical Inspector cases that could be dealt with by the parents. Subsequently the nurses visit the homes of the children and show the parents how to apply simple dressings, to treat simple ailments, and to provide suitable diet and clothing for the children. The nurses have also been able, in a large number of cases, to follow up the Medical Inspector's reports and to induce parents to provide medical or dental treatment where this would otherwise have been neglected. The nurses are generally welcomed by the parents, who regard them as friends and advisers.

The Medical Inspectors have given further direct assistance by delivering lectures to parents on the means of providing for the physical welfare of their children. These lectures have been well attended and have been highly appreciated. Leaflets and pamphlets have also been distributed where required, giving simple directions to parents regarding the care of the teeth and skin, on the treatment of simple ailments, on the diet, clothing, sleeping, and other requirements of children.

The Medical Inspectors also give regular lectures on the work of medical inspection and on physical welfare of children to the training college students, and also, where possible, to groups of other teachers. The teachers are taking an