

*Police Buildings and Sites.*

Following up the suggestion in last year's report, you have been good enough to authorize the acquisition of houses and land required for police establishments, and some valuable properties have been secured on very favourable conditions. The cost of new buildings has been so great that in many cases houses have been bought at a great advantage in comparison with cost of new constructions.

The list of properties which are still required is very large, and is contained in the estimates of the Public Works Department. To make satisfactory progress with the equipment of the Department in respect of houses, an expenditure at the rate of £25,000 per annum is essential for several years.

Apart from quarters the housing difficulty generally is causing serious embarrassment in connection with transfers of constables, especially from town to country stations. Even married men already stationed in cities and towns have the utmost difficulty in retaining possession of dwellings, or in finding other residences when dispossessed. Some satisfactory solution must be devised immediately through the extension of the functions and powers of the Department of Labour, the Public Works Department, or the Advances to Settlers Department. Either the Department must acquire houses to accommodate its officers at reasonable rents, or assist them to acquire houses by purchase. In the Police Force, owing to the constant changes in residence caused by transfers, the latter suggestion is the less practicable.

*Equipment.—Motor-vans, &c.*

During the year one motor-van for Wellington, two for Auckland, and one for Christchurch have been constructed on original designs submitted by the Department with valuable suggestions by yourself and under your personal supervision. These vehicles supplied a long-felt want, and not only adequately and exactly fulfil the departmental requirements, but also effect considerable saving in expenditure and time. The vehicles are primarily intended for the conveyance of prisoners, but they are also quite suitable for ambulance work and are fitted out with a complete ambulance equipment. Their suitability in this respect has been demonstrated. They are also used for various purposes such as the transport of despatches, parcels, prisoners' luggage, and small quantities of goods of any kind received from the railway or post office. The smaller type of van is also suitable for despatch to the scene of arrest on streets, to convey the prisoner under cover through the streets to the police-station. A few more are required for other large centres.

A touring-car for the use of the Commissioner and the Superintendent and staff at headquarters has also been supplied. It is most useful in the visitation and supervision of the city and suburban stations and for patrol purposes by the officers. A similar car is required at the headquarters of every officer in charge of a district, and at many other important towns one might be placed with advantage.

Some motor-bicycles for patrol of residential and suburban areas of the cities have also been acquired, and an extension of the system will no doubt be made.

*Committee of Inquiry, 1919.*

In the course of the growth and development of the Police Force since its foundation, the two branches, the Uniform and the Detective Branch, developed correspondingly, but no definite system of co-ordinating their relative rights and status in respect of advancement to the higher positions was established. The method of selection from either branch was therefore haphazard and casual. This condition led to many anomalies which caused intense dissatisfaction. The attempts made to solve the trouble only caused greater difficulties and more anomalies. To endeavour to solve the matter and provide a permanent remedy, you appointed in March, 1919, a Committee of Inquiry consisting of Mr. W. G. Riddell, S.M. (Chairman), Superintendents Kiely and Wright, Inspector McGrath, and Sub-Inspector Broberg to investigate and take evidence and furnish you with their report and recommendations. It is matter for congratulation that not one objection was made to the personnel of the committee. The committee sat at Wellington, Dunedin, Christchurch, Palmerston North, and Auckland. All members of the Force were given ample notice of the sittings, and any one who had any evidence or suggestion affecting the difficulty was invited to put it forward either in person or by a representative. The evidence and suggestions of those who attended either in a representative or individual capacity were taken in writing. After two months engaged in taking evidence and consideration of the matter the committee furnished a report, which has been published in the *Police Gazette* of this year, page 417. This document is perhaps the most able and valuable record in the Department on the subject of police administration. Its findings in respect of the relative status of men in the two branches, no doubt, will not give satisfaction to every person affected, but no other determination right in principle seemed possible. It is regretted that in the course of past administration of a Force, from its inception to full development, anomalies resulting perhaps in injustice to individuals have arisen. It must be said, however, that in many cases the officers themselves who complained acquiesced in their conditions until in the course of time they discovered they had been placed in a position of disadvantage.

To carry out their suggestions the committee drafted amended regulations; these have been incorporated with a draft of the main body of regulations, which had been held in abeyance for some time pending the inquiry. The whole result now is a body of regulations which, though no doubt containing some imperfections which will be discovered in practice, will be found, I hope, to be inferior to none in the Empire.