

Eight-hour System

Incidentally the Committee of Inquiry investigated the demand put forward in the first instance by representative sergeants and afterwards by the Public Service Association for a continuous shift of eight hours per day on street duty, in place of the two alternating shifts of four hours each on day duty. A trial of the system had been begun at Wellington before the committee was appointed, and some evidence as to its suitability and satisfaction with the change was available to the committee. A recommendation was made that the system be put on trial for twelve months in the remaining three cities, Auckland, Christchurch, and Dunedin, where different climatic and other conditions obtained, the final decision to rest upon the reports of the officers in charge of the districts. Instructions have been issued accordingly.

Combined with other well-known causes, principally the housing conditions, the eight-hour system will probably have the effect of inducing the men to seek residences in the places more and more remote from their governing stations. In fact, the better conditions expected from this was one of the reasons put forward in support of the eight-hour system. It is obvious that the tendency, from any cause, to distribute the residences of members of the Force over wide areas beyond convenient call in emergencies from their stations is not desirable. This indicates the expediency and necessity of acquiring a sufficient number of houses for the accommodation of married men at some place or places convenient to the stations to which such men are detailed.

The Influenza Epidemic.

During this epidemic in October, November, and December, 1918, many members of the Force, in common with the other members of the population, were laid aside with the malady. As many as sixty-five men of the Auckland City Force were laid up at one time with it. Throughout the Dominion the members of the Force worked heroically and unselfishly in aiding the sick, assisting local organizations, burying the dead, and other work in aid of the Public Health Department. The highest commendations of the conduct of the police and of the value of their services have been received from Government Departments, local bodies, Hospital Boards, relief organizations, medical men, and private individuals. With deep regret I chronicle the loss of one Senior Sergeant and fourteen constables who fell victims to the disease, which in all probability in most cases was contracted in the execution of their duty. The only recognition possible of their services has been made by the grant of compassionate allowances to their widows and children.

Criminal Statistics.

The method of presenting criminal statistics hitherto in use is found to be unsatisfactory, and a new system, which it is hoped will be an improvement, is being drawn up, and will be utilized in furnishing the returns for 1919.

The War—Cessation.

Many of the conditions obtaining in continental countries as an aftermath of the war prevail in this Dominion and cause a certain amount of apprehension and unrest. I refer to the cost of living, the hampering of industries and commerce, and the dislocation of labour. Happily these conditions are not so acute with us as in the more congested countries where manufacturing absorbs the vast majority of workers; and no definite organized public upheaval occurred. The good sense of a community enjoying the most liberal constitutional privileges has asserted itself in every emergency and promises to prevail at all times over passions.

Police Instruction.

The Public Service Association in one of its remits submitted to you asked that a work be compiled embodying the whole of the subjects in the police syllabus of examination in the law and police papers. The reply was that such a compilation was impracticable. You pointed out, however, that the Department was not unmindful of the necessity of instructing the men in the law affecting their duties out of which many of the questions set must be obtained. You referred to the first volume of Law Reports of criminal and evidence cases, begun in January, 1917, and completed in December, 1918, which has been compiled for use of members of the Police Force only, and of which a copy has been furnished to every police-station in the Dominion. This in itself is an excellent production, and, when used intelligently and diligently in conjunction with the statutes, a complete copy of which is furnished to every station and every office as they are published, should go a long way towards filling all requirements.

“Where are the Police?”

A return is appended showing the distribution of the men of the Force in the ten districts into which the Dominion is divided. It will be seen that there are 240 places where only one man is stationed, 28 places where there are only two, 14 places with three men, 12 places with four men, 7 places with five men, 3 places with six men, 4 places with seven men, 4 places with eight men, 1 place with nine men, 1 place with ten men, and only 13 places with more than ten men.

The total strength of the Force on the 31st March ultimo was 878. Of this number, on the average, 80 men were on the sick-list or on leave throughout the whole year, thus seriously increasing the deficit already existing of men available for duty.