

The storage in bulk will ultimately result in much safer conditions, particularly in town areas, than those existing under the old method of distribution, and a number of fires on premises where pumps have been erected have proved the safety of the pump installation.

Local authority administration: The Act and regulations are administered by all the boroughs in New Zealand except South Invercargill, Kumara, West Harbour, and Winton. They are also administered by twenty-eight independent town districts and twelve town districts forming part of counties. The change over to bulk petrol, as explained above, caused some difficulty in the administration of the Act during the past year, but with a few minor exceptions the administration by the local authorities is very satisfactory.

Departmental administration: The Department administers the Act in all districts other than those controlled by licensing authorities. During the year ended 31st March, 1926, 1,161 licenses were issued, as compared with 1,235 licenses issued during the year ended 31st March, 1927.

Inspection: Practically all boroughs and town districts where the Act is administered by the local authority are inspected at least once each license year. The introduction of petrol in bulk has involved a considerable number of special inspection visits to different parts of the country, both in connection with the erection of tank depots and to explain to the local authorities the conditions required by the new method of distribution.

Cinematograph-film: The regulations regarding cinematograph-film came into force on the 30th September, 1925, and during the license year ended 30th September, 1926, 326 theatre licenses were issued. The inspection work for the year covers practically only the theatres in the larger towns. It was not possible to do more than this, as the inspection staff was engaged practically altogether in controlling the change over from cased to bulk petrol. The conditions found, however, in many of the theatres amply proved the necessity for the regulations, and occasional inspections of country districts have shown that the conditions existing are also very far from satisfactory. It is hoped during the coming year to complete the country-theatre inspection and to have projection-rooms erected in all the country halls.

DOMINION ARCHIVES.

The establishment of a Dominion Archive or Record Office for the proper custody of important historical documents dating back to the foundation of New Zealand as a colony has been decided on, and I am pleased to record the appointment of Dr. G. H. Scholefield, Chief Librarian of the General Assembly Library, as Controller of Dominion Archives. The first action has been to locate and investigate the storage conditions of valuable records held by the various Departments of State. It is too early yet to indicate what has happened to the many historical documents of the early stages of colonization or to verify their existence, but it has been established that a considerable bulk of official papers of the highest historical value has been preserved, including some which were thought to have been lost in the wreck of the "White Swan" on the occasion of the transfer of the seat of Government from Auckland to Wellington. With a view to the preservation of local records, a circular has been transmitted to the municipalities of New Zealand suggesting that they might make an appreciable contribution to the history of their localities by binding and preserving files of local papers. This suggestion has already been adopted by several Borough Councils. It is hoped to arrange for a suitable repository, and commence the examination, sorting, and indexing of the records at an early date.

CONCLUSION.

In conclusion I desire to place on record my appreciation of the valuable services rendered during the past year by the heads of sub-departments, sectional officers and departmental officers of all grades. Their hearty co-operation has made possible the successful carrying-out of the many and varied activities of the Department, and ensured the smooth running that has characterized the work throughout.

I desire also to thank other Government Departments for the willing assistance afforded by them at all times.

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