

HOSPITALS.

The past two years have been somewhat strenuous ones, for during that period I have visited almost every part of the Dominion. Unfortunately, I have brought upon myself much criticism, for I have ventured to comment on the extraordinary increase in expenditure. The time has certainly come when, in my opinion, a halt, and a very crisp halt, should be called in hospital expenditure.

Might I say that I am very proud of our New Zealand hospitals and the work of the Hospital Boards controlling them. Without the help of these Boards it would have been impossible to build and otherwise develop the hospitals we now have. But there is reason in all things, and, personally, I am appalled at our hospital expenditure, actual and proposed, especially in certain districts; but I do not blame the Boards entirely for this. If it were possible for members of Hospital Boards of this Dominion to visit the Old Land—aye, and other countries, including, mark you, the United States of America—they would come back to this Dominion very pleased and very proud not only of our hospitals, but of our public institutions as a whole. They would think, I am sure, that for a population of barely one and a half million souls we have done not so badly, but extremely well—and all that in about the lifetime of some of our very aged pioneers.

Information with regard to hospitals and institutions under the control of Boards will be given in the Appendix of this report to be issued after the Secretaries' returns come to hand.

PUBLICITY AND PROPAGANDA.

The Department has continued to spread the principles of health through the aid of the press, lectures, exhibitions, general advice by officers attached to the many branches of the Department's activities, and circulation of numerous pamphlets.

MEDICAL RESEARCH.

This important function of the Department has received close attention. Dr. Hector's review is included in the Appendix to this report, and outlines the result of certain inquiries conducted at the Otago University School. A special investigation was carried out by Dr. Shore, Medical Officer of Health, and Dr. Morgan, School Medical Officer, and Mr. Andrew, of the Dominion Laboratory staff, into the incidence of goitre in school-children in the Hutt Valley. A medical progress report by Dr. Shore appears in the Appendix on this investigation; also studies of rheumatic diseases among Auckland school-children by Dr. Turbott and Dr. Wilkie. An abridged report on the health conditions and environment of certain rural school-children, by Dr. Henderson, appears in the Appendix. A summary of the school treatment of goitre will be found in the report of the Director, Division of School Hygiene. A laboratory investigation into the relationship of iodine-deficiency to goitre was undertaken by Mr. Cox, under the supervision of Professor Hercus of the Otago Medical School. Arrangements are in train for the initiation by Dr. Hector of an inquiry into still-births and first-month mortality of infants.

LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

During the year, at the invitation of the League of Nations, Dr. Hughes, Medical Officer of Health, Auckland, visited India and made a study of the systems of health administration in vogue in that important part of the British Empire. The Medical Department of the League of Nations was, on the request of that body, furnished with a handbook on the New Zealand health organization.

CO-OPERATION WITH OVERSEAS ORGANIZATIONS.

The Department has tried, with some success, to co-operate with various overseas organizations in the latter's endeavour to foster the science and practice of preventive medicine.

Lieut.-Colonel James, M.D., of the Ministry of Health, Great Britain, a delegate representing the Dominion of New Zealand, on the permanent committee of the Office International d'Hygiene Publique, submitted a report on the 1927 session of this organization. For the proposed annual quarantine volume of that office the Department prepared a statement on quarantine organization in New Zealand. The Department's association with the International Union against Tuberculosis has enabled it to keep well advised of recent advances in the treatment and prevention of this disease.

The Ministry of Health, Great Britain, and the Health Committee of the League of Nations have been kept abreast of certain aspects of the cancer problem in New Zealand. In these matters the publications received from the Ministry of Health, Medical Research Council, and League of Nations have proved invaluable.

LEGISLATION.

With the passing of the Dangerous Drugs Act last session in order to carry out New Zealand's obligations under the Geneva convention, additional duties in this connection devolve upon the Department. Regulations necessary to give effect to the provisions of the Act are in course of preparation. While it is not considered that illicit traffic in drugs of a habit-forming nature is an appreciable factor in New Zealand at the present time, the machinery now provided should be effective in preventing any development of the traffic which, has already shown itself in more heavily populated countries.

SCHOOL HYGIENE.

Under the direction of Dr. Ada Paterson this Division carries on most valuable work on behalf of the health of our school-children. Attention is drawn to the report on the result of the school treatment of goitre. A short résumé is also given of important measures taken in the prevention of tuberculosis amongst our school-children.