

PART VIII.—HEALTH DISTRICTS.—EXTRACTS FROM ANNUAL REPORTS OF MEDICAL OFFICERS OF HEALTH.

SECTION I.—CENTRAL AUCKLAND HEALTH DISTRICT.

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INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

Most of the notifiable infectious diseases have run a fairly normal incidence throughout the year, and, with the exception of scarlet fever and diphtheria, no particular outbreak has occurred. Certain of the schools have been affected by these two diseases, but not to any marked extent, as prompt measures were taken to deal with the matter whenever it became apparent that school infection was taking place, the precautionary measures taken having included the swabbing of contacts and treatment and isolation of diphtheria "carriers" detected and of their contacts, also disinfection of houses affected, and, on occasion, of school class-rooms.

A matter specially dealt with in connection with infectious diseases was the strict investigation of cases of puerperal fever reported, especially when these occurred in a public or a private maternity hospital, and all necessary steps for the prevention of the spread of infection were strictly enforced.

A few cases of bacillary dysentery were notified during the year, but few of these were proven bacteriologically; there were, however, three cases in one household at Remuera which were so proven.

The district has been noticeably free from enteric fever, and this is very satisfactory.

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION.

A general improvement is noted in the sanitation of the district, which has been effected by the co-operation of all the local authorities.

Swimming-baths.—Considerable improvements have been carried out during the year at the public baths under the control of the City Council and other local authorities. Chemical and bacteriological examinations of the baths were carried out by the Department during the summer months, and recommendations were made for improvements for safeguarding bathers. Each of the three salt-water baths under control of the City Council are now provided with liquid chlorinating plants for the sterilization of the sea-water during the filling of the baths. Two of these baths rely on the frequency of emptying and refilling for purity, while the third is provided with a recirculation and heating system, being a tepid bath. The position of the intake for these latter baths I consider is most unsatisfactory. The safety of the water depends on efficient chlorination. Examination of public-school baths shows that more frequent emptying and cleansing is necessary. Examination of St. Cuthbert's School swimming-bath showed that the bath, with its up-to-date chlorination, filtration, and recirculation system, had been in use for twelve months without emptying and renewal of the bath-water, and still showed no coli in 100 c.c. The ammonia figure was somewhat raised, but not above three parts per 1,000,000.

Pollution of Waitemata Harbour.—Investigations were carried out during the year as regards pollution of this harbour. There is no doubt that a considerable amount of pollution from agricultural and pastoral lands enters the harbour from the various creeks discharging into same; also from storm-water drains from the city streets, storm-water sewage overflows, and from shipping, quite apart from the sewage-discharge from Northcote, Devonport, and Orakei.

Examination of a number of samples of sea-water from various parts of the harbour were made during the year, the results showing that the harbour is not polluted to any great extent. This is, no doubt, due to the huge dilution which is available, and to the action of the tides. However, a nuisance is created through the discharge of solids at all states of the tide from the Devonport sewage, there being no sewage-treatment at North Head. Similarly, at Orakei, during the discharge of the collecting-tank a nuisance is created. This sewage is discharged on the ebb tide. It is screened before passing into the collecting-tank. Improvements are being carried out in connection with the screening at Orakei works in accordance with a request from the Department. The deposition of solids on beaches is more likely to occur from the discharge of sewage which is not screened and from shipping. Examination of samples of mud from beaches did not disclose sewage contamination. A daily refuse-collection is made by the Harbour Board from all shipping in the harbour, this having been instituted at the request of the Department.

Pollution of Manukau Harbour.—This matter is one which still awaits solution. A marked nuisance from the discharge of drainage effluents from the various offensive trades is being created. Similarly, the discharge of sewage into this harbour from Onehunga is a matter requiring urgent attention. With the increase in population the limit of the sewage-collecting tank has been reached, and on certain occasions the discharge of the sewage creates a nuisance. The discharge of Mount Roskill sewage into this harbour does not in itself give rise to difficulty, but nuisance has been created in the past during the emptying of the sludge.

The above drainage problems have been placed before the various local authorities and the Auckland Drainage Board and Harbour Board, and have been the subject of conferences during the year. It is recognized that a combined drainage scheme dealing with these is the only solution, and that the first step is for the districts involved to be included in the Auckland Drainage Board area. The various parties agreed that a comprehensive scheme should be drawn up by the Engineer to the Auckland Drainage Board, and this is being undertaken.