

In addition to making good the ravages of dental disease by means of suitable treatment, the teaching of oral hygiene, and of the principles of prevention of dental disease, is regarded as an essential function of the School Dental Service. During the last twelve months no less than 1,403 separate activities have been recorded under this heading. These were mainly talks to classes and groups of children, but they also included competitions, inspections for clean teeth, tooth-brush drill, &c., as well as addresses to meetings of adults. Many of the dental nurses show considerable ingenuity in devising means for interesting the children in this direction.

Other activities of the Division of Dental Hygiene include the inspection of the dental hospitals of the Dominion, and, since 1936, the administration of the Dentists Act which was passed in that year, and of the regulations made under it. Among other things, the Act provided for the setting-up of the Dental Council of New Zealand, and for the Director-General of Health, or his deputy, to have a seat on the Council, and to be Chairman for the first three years. For this purpose the Director of the Division of Dental Hygiene acts as the deputy of the Director-General of Health.

The Division is actively associated with the work of the Medical Research Council, which was set up in 1937. The Director is a member of the Dental Committee of the Council, and an officer of the Dental Division is carrying out the preliminary investigation for the Council in connection with dental disease.

The successful development of the School Dental Service has been assisted in no small degree by the ready and willing co-operation of local dental clinic committees, teachers, staffs of Education Boards, and others. Ever since the inception of the service dental clinic committees have been responsible for the local administration of treatment centres, and of recent years their responsibilities in this direction, which are undertaken entirely in a voluntary capacity, have increased considerably. The influence exerted by these committees locally has done much to facilitate the progress of the service.

During the twenty years that have elapsed since the inception of a Government dental service steady progress has, on the whole, been made. There is every reason to believe that within another two years the completion of the School Dental Service as an integral part of the primary-school system of the Dominion will be an accomplished fact.

SCHOOL DENTAL SERVICE: PROGRESS OF EXPANSION PROGRAMME.

The expansion of the School Dental Service is proceeding steadily according to plan. The decision to expand the service was made in December, 1935. At that time, the field staff consisted of 4 dental officers and 169 school dental nurses, and there were 46 student dental nurses undergoing training, of whom 28 were in their first year and 18 in the second year. A preliminary investigation was made into the staff requirements of a complete service, and a programme of expansion was drawn up. The first requirement was to assess what the ultimate task would be, in order to calculate the number of dental nurses that would be required. The annual report of the Director of Education for the year 1935 furnished the necessary statistics of the number of pupils in the primary schools of the Dominion. The figures were:—

State primary schools (including the Correspondence School) ..	198,680
Private primary schools	26,869
Total	225,549

Taking four-fifths of this number as the approximate number of pupils up to and including Standard IV (the point at which dental treatment ceases at present), 180,440 would be eligible for dental treatment.

Allowing 500 patients per dental nurse (the basis on which the service has been organized for many years), 360 school dental nurses would be required to deal with the pupils up to Standard IV. If Standards V and VI (Forms I and II) were to be dealt with in addition, a further 90 dental nurses would be required, making a total of 450. Allowing an arbitrary estimate of a further 50 for children of pre-school age, the total staff required was estimated to be approximately 500.

The task set the Department was to expand the School Dental Service so that it would be available to the children of all the primary schools in the Dominion within five years. The programme that was prepared for carrying out this expansion policy visualized three stages. The first stage was to be a preparatory period, during which training facilities would be expanded and arrangements made for the appointment of increased numbers of student dental nurses. As it takes two years to train a school dental nurse it was evident that the main expansion in the field could not commence until at least two years after the expansion programme had been launched. Thus the first stage would cover the years 1936 to 1938. During the second stage, 1938 to 1941, new clinics would be opened, and existing clinics would be reinforced, so that more and more schools would be linked up each year. In the third stage training to maximum capacity would be continued probably for two years, in order to build up a sufficient staff to extend treatment to Standard VI (Form II), and to children of pre-school age. Thereafter the number of nurses trained annually would be reduced to a sufficient number to maintain the service at full strength.

Such is the programme which is now being carried out. When entering upon the first stage it became obvious at once that the training facilities then existing were totally inadequate either to build up or to maintain at full strength the staff that would be required. Accordingly the training centre at Government Buildings, Wellington, was extended, and the training facilities were further augmented by the conversion of the official residence of the Prime Minister into a temporary training centre. While these arrangements were in progress a draft of 50 student dental nurses commenced training in April, 1936, this being the largest draft to enter training in any one year up to that time. Coincident with these preparations arrangements were made for the erection in Wellington of a modern