

1942.

NEW ZEALAND.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF HEALTH.

Presented in pursuance of Section 100 of the Hospitals and Charitable Institutions Act, 1926.

HON. A. H. NORDMEYER, MINISTER OF HEALTH.

REPORT.

THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF HEALTH TO THE HON. THE MINISTER OF HEALTH, WELLINGTON.

I HAVE the honour to lay before you the annual report of the Department for the year 1941-42.

INTRODUCTION.

During the year under review the Department of Health has been engaged in ever-increasing degree with matters directly related to the Dominion's war effort. The most important of these perhaps was the moulding of the public-hospital system into a Hospitals Emergency Precautions Service armed with resources in staff, buildings, and equipment adequate to deal with all possible contingencies.

An increased incidence of cerebro-spinal fever and syphilis was not unexpected, as both these diseases flourish in times of war. Otherwise the state of the public health was relatively good. In particular it is pleasing to record a further rise in the birth-rate and a decline in both the still-birth and the infant-mortality rates.

VITAL STATISTICS.

(Exclusive of Maoris.)

Population.—The mean population of the Dominion for 1941 was estimated to be 1,538,620, a decrease of 7,692 from the corresponding figure for 1940.

Death-rate.—The death-rate was 9·81 per 1,000 mean population, as compared with a rate of 9·24 in the preceding year.

Infant Mortality.—The infant-mortality rate was 29·74 per 1,000 live births. In 1940 the rate was 30·21.

Still-births.—The still-birth rate was 27·66 per 1,000 live births (29·45 in 1940).

Birth-rate.—The total births in 1941 were 35,100, representing a rate of 22·81 per 1,000 mean population (21·19 in 1940).

Maternal Mortality.—The maternal-mortality rate, including deaths from septic abortion, was 3·36 per 1,000 live births, as compared with 2·93 in 1940. When deaths from septic abortion are deducted, the maternal mortality rate was 2·68 (2·50 in 1940).

INFECTIOUS AND OTHER DISEASES.

(Exclusive of Maori, unless otherwise stated.)

Three thousand six hundred and twenty-three cases of notifiable diseases were reported in all in 1941, as compared with 2,929 in 1940.

Scarlet Fever.—Scarlet fever accounted for 338 notified cases, with 1 death. The corresponding figures for the previous year were 357 cases and 1 death.

Diphtheria.—Diphtheria showed a slight increase, 383 cases being notified, as compared with 367 in 1940. There were 17 deaths, giving a death-rate of 0·11 per 10,000 of mean population. In 1940 the corresponding figures were 15 deaths and a death-rate of 0·10. The campaign of active immunization against this disease was continued. Dr. Cook, Medical Officer of Health, Palmerston North, states that if progress in immunization continues at the same rate as in the past four years the disease should ultimately become of little importance. Already most Medical Superintendents in his district are remarking on the lessened incidence in the hospitals which they control.