

The admission of many of these old people is due to a shortage of nursing staff generally and lack of other suitable homes for their care. I consider they are well cared for in our hospitals, but their presence in increasing numbers adds a considerable burden to our depleted nursing staff and is responsible very largely for the overcrowding of accommodation in our hospitals.

ADMISSION OF INFANTS

It is found that applications for admission of infants have also been increasing in recent years. Every effort has been made to have other arrangements made for mentally deficient children under three years of age. Parents or relatives, however, find that admission to children's or babies' homes is refused for various reasons, including staff shortage. At Nelson, Templeton Farm, and Levin Farm, where most of the children are cared for, the constant care and attention of even a few infants under three years of age is an added responsibility, particularly as the nursing staff have not been specially trained in the care of infants.

When it is mentioned that 83 children under the age of five years were resident at the end of the year, it will be appreciated that the number admitted each year in this group is showing a gradual increase.

DIETARY AND CLOTHING

The improvement in the supply of commodities generally has allowed of an increase of variety in the diet of patients. Every effort is being made at the same time to improve the standard and variety of patients' clothing. It is hoped that further improvements may be carried out and may become more noticeable this year.

FURNISHINGS OF WARDS

Although many of our older buildings may be considered out of date in their construction, &c., they are all capable of brightening up and of increased comfort, and steps have already been taken along these lines. Progress has been slow in some cases because of difficulty of supply, but again considerable improvement is now in sight.

PATIENTS' COMFORTS ALLOWANCE

A small weekly allowance to those patients capable of its appreciation, was agreed to during the year, and has been of considerable benefit to the patients. A large number of patients have been materially assisted in this way, and it has been a "worthwhile" expenditure, in that patients have been able to provide for themselves such personal articles as they themselves desired. In the canteens now instituted at all hospitals the variety of supplies is increased as is found desirable to the patients themselves.

BUILDING PROGRAMME

The rate of progress of our building programme has been much slower than expected. This is attributable to the shortage of labour and materials and also the fact that plans of many new buildings had to be redesigned with the object of reducing the quantities of basic materials, particularly steel, which is in such short supply. Progress has been made in the rebuilding of Porirua Hospital and the erection of villas at Lake Alice; but unfortunately this has not been rapid enough to alleviate our serious overcrowding.