

In addition to above, 9 candidates were examined for the Engineering Knowledge Section of the Restricted Limits P.V.O.S. Master's Certificate.

### POLLUTION OF WATERS

The fact-finding survey on the extent and causes of pollution of inland and coastal waters and on the law and administrative machinery for enforcing it was completed for the Interdepartmental Committee, and the report was submitted to Cabinet.

The report showed that, partly because of inadequacies of existing law and because of excessive division of administration responsibility, there had, over a long period, been a progressive increase in pollution in New Zealand. In some cases to-day pollution results in serious economic loss. Instances of this are—

- (1) The manurial value of cowyard refuse drained into streams each year is estimated to be equivalent to £500,000 worth of artificial fertilizer.
- (2) A single gold-slucing claim, on a portion of the Buller River system, during a ten-year period sluiced into the river about 900,000 more cubic yards of material than the dredge removed from inside the Westport Harbour (as distinct from bar dredgings).

More usually pollution is objectionable either because it threatens the interests of local authorities, farmers, and industrialists who require to draw clean waters from natural streams, or because it fouls and renders unpleasant beaches and streams where the average citizen, his wife, and children may wish to bathe or picnic.

No less than ten different statutes contain provisions about pollution. Such statutes, and regulations and by-laws made under them, are administered by six different Departments and by over three hundred local bodies of several types. Because of the multiplicity of administrative authorities and the absence of adequate liaison, there is often neglect of action on the assumption that some one else is attending to matters. In other cases, there is uneconomic overlapping of administrative activity which is irritating and confusing to industry. Those seeking to establish new industries are confused because no one authority can give complete approval of drainage plans in advance. In consequence, industrialists either ignore all authorities, or "hawk" their problems from Department to Department or from local body to local body.

Legislation has not been changed to keep pace with industrial development. In consequence, much present law is obsolete and inherently partial. For instance, in mining districts there is almost complete freedom to put mining refuse into streams, while discharge of sawdust into the same water is actionable. Under one statute discharge of certain industrial wastes is proscribed, while other equally noxious substances have, in practice, almost free entry because the burden of proof of damage done is difficult or expensive to discharge.

Again there is evidence that certain authorities, which have statutory obligations to prevent pollution by others, find themselves compromised by pollution arising from their own undertakings. Cases sometimes arise where, in disregard to statutory obligations, local authorities consider they have a duty to protect local ratepayers causing pollution from administrative activity. The record of activity of Government Departments themselves is not very satisfactory, although recently much has been done to limit pollution by State activities.

Government Departments have been able to make progress in co-ordinating their own activity regarding control of pollution, but they have considered it desirable to have the co-operation of local authorities if a comprehensive approach to the whole question of pollution is to be made. On the recommendation of the ten member Departments comprising the Interdepartmental Committee, legislation was drafted which aimed at establishing a national pollution council with departmental and local-body representation. The Bill contemplated a council with functions which, initially, would have been largely co-ordinating and advisory. The Bill would have added nothing to existing penal provisions, because experience has shown that penal provisions alone have been