

to meet the requirements of the Act. These requests were immediately complied with by supplying all information on the subject.

Unavoidable delay has been occasioned through a number of properties having changed hands during the year; in such cases it has been necessary to again commence proceedings by issuing fresh notices to the new proprietors. There have also been numerous cases in which unavoidable difficulties and delays have been caused, especially in the Gisborne and Tolaga Bay districts, through the difficulty experienced in carting the requisite building material to the various stations, owing to bad roads, which in many instances were rendered quite impassable by the heavy and continuous rains and floods experienced just prior to the time when the work was to have been commenced. On a request being made for an extension of time, the request has been granted, providing that the circumstances warranted it.

On the other hand, there have been cases in which the proprietors have actually defied, or ignored the Department, and in these circumstances application for a Magistrate's order has been the only alternative. The following cases have been brought before the Court:—

At Kaikoura a sheepowner was proceeded against for failing to provide proper accommodation for his shearers, and the Magistrate adjourned the case in order to give the defendant an opportunity to comply. On our Inspector paying a subsequent visit, he found that the Magistrate's orders had been satisfactorily complied with, and at the adjourned hearing the case was accordingly withdrawn. At Herbertville a similar case was brought before the Court, and the sheepowner, who had failed to comply with a notice which had been served on him, was ordered by the Magistrate to carry out the required improvements within two months. In this case also the order was fully complied with to the satisfaction of the local Inspector. Costs and expenses to the amount of £1 13s. were allowed. Three cases at Tolaga Bay and one at Gisborne were dismissed by the Magistrate on the ground that the notices had not been served as required by the Act, his Worship holding that service by registered letter was not sufficient compliance with section 6 (2), notwithstanding the fact that receipts for the letters were held by the local Inspector, and produced by him in the Court. I need hardly point out that this decision means more expense and delay in carrying out the provisions of the Act. Wherever possible I shall instruct the Department's officers to deliver the required notice at the time of the original inspection, so that a second visit will not be necessary.

Another case of neglect to comply with a notice issued by the Department was heard at Wanganui, and the presiding Magistrate ordered the defendant to carry out the required improvements by the 30th June, 1911; and again, in the same Court, another sheepowner, charged with a similar offence, gave a satisfactory undertaking to the Magistrate that the notice would be fully complied with before the next shearing season, and the case was thereupon withdrawn.

During the period under review numerous complaints were received from Secretaries of Unions in various parts of the Dominion as to the accommodation provided for the shearers at certain stations. These complaints were promptly investigated, and in some instances were found to be justified. The defects complained about were at once ordered to be remedied, and, as a rule, the desired improvements were duly carried into effect; on the other hand, a large number of the complaints reported to the Department were groundless.

Some of our Inspectors have from time to time suggested, at the instigation of the shearers themselves, that the use of tents for sleeping purposes be in certain cases allowed. These cases have arisen in the warmer climates and where Maori shearers are employed. In many cases the Maoris prefer tents, and even go to the extent of pulling down bunks provided for them in accommodation buildings. It must be admitted that tents are preferable in such cases, especially where, as is usually the case, the Maoris take their families with them, and anything approaching privacy cannot be obtained except by means of tents. There is also the advantage that, when shearing is over, which is a matter of only a few weeks, the tents can be cleared away and the place easily cleaned up. The suggestion has, however, been looked upon as being liable to abuse. The plan has in a number of instances been given a trial, it being strictly stipulated that in no case could the proposal be entertained unless the shearers themselves expressed a preference for this kind of accommodation. The result in the few instances allowed has so far been satisfactory.

During the year a total of 320 places were inspected under the Act. Of this total, 205 were found to be satisfactory. Minor alterations were necessary in 29 cases, 27 required extensive alterations, and in 16 instances no accommodation whatever was provided. In 43 cases additional buildings are to be erected. The whole of the work requiring attention, as indicated, is now in hand, and I hope to report that the buildings have been completed, added to, or altered, as the case may be, before next shearing season opens.

Details showing the inspections made, and condition of the accommodation provided in the several districts in the Dominion are given at the end of this report.