

satisfactory footing. In order to provide reasonable assistance to Hospital Boards it will be necessary this year to substantially increase the permanent appropriations.

Probably in no other country do the people make more use of the public hospitals than in New Zealand. Their increasing popularity throws heavier responsibilities upon the Government and hospital authorities. A further reason for increasing the subsidies is to be found in the fact that surgical and medical science have practically been revolutionized during the war period, and these great changes have created a need for the development of special departments in our hospitals which were never before contemplated. It is because our hospitals are being efficiently conducted for the treatment of disease that they are so well patronized. This increasing expenditure is, however, receiving close supervision, and mainly for this purpose an Inspector of Hospitals has been appointed.

PUBLIC HEALTH.

Owing to the report of the Royal Commission set up to inquire into the recent influenza epidemic it has been found necessary to provide a staff sufficient not only to attend to the immediate needs of the country as regards infectious diseases, but to keep in touch with the Health authorities throughout the world so that it will not be possible for the country to be taken unexpectedly as was the case in 1918.

MATERNITY HOMES.

The important work of maternity homes is being greatly extended, and the establishment of additional hospitals under the St. Helens principle is contemplated. The value of this work in a country such as this, where it is so hard for expectant mothers to get necessary assistance, is incalculable. The popularity of these institutions is evidenced by the increasing demands for admission, requiring an increase in the number of institutions catering for this important public want. It must be remembered that although the St. Helens hospitals cater largely for the more congested districts, their influence is already felt in the backblocks. This is due to the large number of midwives who are being efficiently trained in these institutions and who are being sent to and stationed in the back districts, where their services are gladly availed of. No less than 1,022 maternity nurses are on the register, and over one hundred a year are being trained and leave the hospitals with certificates. There are already thirteen maternity training-homes, and the number will shortly be increased. Maternity wards are also being established in connection with many of our public hospitals.

It is being recognized all over the world that preventive medicine is to play the greatest part in any State treatment of the question of public health. Already the Department has made a modest start in the shape of educative lectures and propaganda for the benefit of expectant mothers. Ante-natal clinics have been established in many of the important centres and are being largely attended by married women, who receive the best scientific advice and guidance, and, if necessary, treatment.

DISTRICT NURSES.

Further attention is being given to the necessities of the country districts by increasing the establishment of district nurses. These highly-trained and experienced women are being stationed in central positions in the large hospital districts all over the Dominion. The present conditions under which the nurses have to seek lodging in the backblocks are unsatisfactory, and it is proposed, wherever possible, to erect for each nurse a small cottage as a residence, with one or two rooms set apart for emergency cases pending their removal to hospital.

The Department is further able to report very favourably upon the work of the nurses specially appointed for the Native areas. There are sixteen special nurses, who live in the Maori districts and devote their whole time to the health and well-being of the different tribes. The satisfactory state of health of some seven thousand Natives who were gathered at Rotorua at the time of the Prince's visit, notwithstanding the prevalence of influenza, was largely due to the excellent work of the Native nurses.