

Inspection and Testing.—Most of the private magazines and registered premises have been inspected during the year. As in past years, shipments of explosives arriving in New Zealand have been physically examined and tested for stability, and occasional tests made on explosives stored in Government and private magazines.

EXPLOSIVE AND DANGEROUS GOODS AMENDMENT ACT, 1920.

Local-authority Administration.—The Act is administered by the local authority in 158 out of the 188 boroughs and town districts. In the remaining thirty local-authority districts, consisting mainly of small town districts where no suitable officers are available, the Act is administered by the Department under section 16 of the Act.

Satisfactory by-laws have been made either by the local authorities concerned or (in most cases) by Order in Council under the Act, and the administration generally may now be regarded as satisfactory.

Departmental Administration.—The Department administers the Act in country districts, and in the smaller boroughs and town districts referred to above. During the year 563 licenses were issued, as compared with 347 during the previous year.

Prosecutions.—During the year a number of prosecutions under the Act were taken in Christchurch City. It was found on inspection that only a small proportion of persons storing dangerous goods were licensed by the local authority, and the conditions existing in the town were in many cases positively dangerous. In all, sixteen cases were taken under section 4 of the Act, which involves the forfeiture of the goods concerned. Since the prosecutions were taken as a warning and to obtain publicity in regard to the Act, heavy penalties were not asked for, and fines of £1 and £2 were inflicted. It is satisfactory to record that the action taken was effective, and the storage conditions in Christchurch are now reasonably satisfactory—455 licenses being issued for the current year, as compared with 108 for the previous year.

Warnings were given in a number of cases for minor breaches of the Act and regulations. In other instances the dangerous goods were seized by the Inspector under section 6 of the Act, but subsequently released on compliance with the Department's requirements.

Inspection.—Practically all boroughs and town districts where the Act is administered by the local authority have been inspected during the year, and it was found that the conditions generally were very satisfactory, and the Act is now being adequately enforced by most of the local authorities. In some few cases it was necessary to call the attention of the local authority to slackness in the administration, but in most instances the matter has now been rectified. The trouble was generally due to alterations in the personnel of the local-authority staff, and it is to be expected that this difficulty will recur. The intention of the Department is, however, to make at least one inspection of each local-authority district every year.

It will be seen from the number of licenses issued by the Department that the inspection of country stores has been carried on to a considerable extent during the year. This work is, however, not by any means complete, and it is hoped to give more attention to it during the coming year.

Compressed Gases.—In November, 1923, a cylinder of compressed acetylene (in acetone) burst when the cylinder was tipped from a hand-truck on to a concrete wharf at Napier. A number of men were injured, and two subsequently died from their injuries. As a result of this accident the Department is taking up the question of the filling and storage of compressed gases, and it is proposed to prepare legislation regarding the matter during the coming year.

Cinematograph Films.—The conditions under which cinematograph films are at present being stored and conveyed in New Zealand is not satisfactory, and it is proposed to prepare legislation controlling these matters during the coming year.

STAFF.

It is a matter of gratification that Dr. J. Allan Thomson, Director of the Dominion Museum, has sufficiently recovered in health to enable him to resume his duties.

The British Empire Exhibition has been responsible for a heavy increase of work in several sections of the Department, notably in the Publicity Branch, through the preparation and despatch of cinema-film, photographs, and literature, and in the Dominion Museum, where the preparation of exhibits and mural decorations for the New Zealand pavilion necessitated the attention of one senior officer for the whole of the year. Notwithstanding this non-recurring additional work, the activities of the Department have been given efficient attention, and I am pleased to again record my appreciation of the services rendered by heads of sub-departments, Controlling Officers, and the staff in general.

The valuable assistance given by other Departments is acknowledged with thanks.

Approximate Cost of Paper.—Preparation, not given; printing (510 copies), £16.

By Authority: W. A. G. SKINNER, Government Printer, Wellington.—1924.

Price 6d.]