

POLICE BUILDINGS, ETC.

The following works in connection with police-stations have been carried out during the year by the Public Works Department :—

New police-stations were erected at Denniston, Foxton, Leeston, Mercer, The Port (Nelson), Rāhōtu, and Rawene; a lock-up at Kerepehi, and an office at Kurow. The constable's residence at Clyde, office and lock-up at Ruatōrea, and additions to offices at Wanganui were completed. Houses for use as police-stations were purchased at Linwood and North-east Valley.

Renovations, alterations, and improvements were effected at Russell, Cambridge, Ellerslie, Frankton, Hamilton, Huntly, Kihikihi, Morrinsville, Ngāruawāhia, Ōtāhanga, Paeroa, Te Aroha, Te Awamutu, Waihi, Warkworth, Whitianga, Tāncatua, Tauranga, Opatiki, Katikati, Ruatōrea, Tolaga Bay, Motu, Rangaroa, Stratford, Normanby, New Plymouth, Waitara, Fitzroy, Eltham, Hawera, Kaponga, Aramoho, Hunterville, Marton, Taihape, Ohakune, Raetihi, Patea, Moawhango, Wanganui, Napier, Woodville, Porangahau, Palmerston North, Nelson, Motueka, Richmond, Takaka, Oxford, St. Andrew's, Coalgate, Geraldine, Ashburton, Rakaia, Fairlie, Methven, Belfast, Christchurch, Lyttelton, Caversham, Cromwell, Dunroon, Kurow, Lawrence, Milton, Mosgiel, Palmerston South, Pembroke, Portobello, Ranfurly, Roxburgh, South Dunedin, and Waitahuna.

GENERAL.

Arms Act.—This Act continues to prove useful. A considerable number of revolvers have been surrendered during the year by persons who realize that they are of no practical utility, and do not care to take the trouble to notify their change of address. In course of time it is hoped that this dangerous weapon will be practically eliminated, as very few of them are now imported.

Buildings.—Repairs to stations have been carried out at many places during the year, and I am pleased to say that police-stations are fast approaching a satisfactory condition. The expense has been heavy owing to the accumulation during the war and since, when expenditure had to be cut down below normal.

Candidates.—During the year 229 applications to join the Force were received. Of these 73 were rejected, 110 placed on the list, and 46 are still under inquiry. During the previous year only 215 applications were received. Inquiry into the antecedents of candidates is very exhaustive, and it may be safely asserted that every man taken into the Force has an absolutely clean character. The class of men offering is quite satisfactory, but their number does not allow of such a good selection being made as was the case some years ago, with the result that men who can only just come up to the standard height and chest-measurement have to be accepted.

Detective Branch.—This branch continues to do good work, and has been very successful in dealing with crime during the year, very little of a serious nature remaining undetected. With the view of raising the status of the branch, the Chief Detective at Wellington was promoted to the rank of Sub-Inspector during the year, and I have reason to believe that this departure from custom has given general satisfaction.

Discipline.—Discipline has been well maintained with ease, very few members of the Force have been punished, and only two dismissed. A few men of short service proved to be unsuited, and were called upon to resign or their services dispensed with. The fact that serious misconduct invariably entails dismissal or enforced retirement is a powerful aid in maintaining discipline and the prestige of the Force.

Drunkenness.—There has been an increase of 435 in the number of persons charged with drunkenness during the year as compared with the previous year, but, as the total number (7,470) is less than the average for past years, no importance can be attached to the small increase this year.

Gaming Act.—The police have been successful in obtaining many convictions against bookmakers (large and small) during the year, and substantial fines have been inflicted; but, as I have remarked in a previous report, the police do not get much assistance from the public, and have to continually adopt fresh tactics to obtain necessary evidence.

Legal.—The amendment to the Police Offences Act of last session has already proved of considerable use; its provisions cured many defects in the law, and provide the police with a better weapon to deal with offenders. The same may be said of the amendment to the Police Force Act.

The Motor-vehicles Act also has proved itself of use in regard to deaths caused through negligent driving. Already a jury has availed itself of convicting under the new Act in preference to convicting of manslaughter.

Promotions.—During the year the following officers have been promoted: Sub-Inspectors D. J. Cummings, J. McIlveney, and A. S. Bird to be Inspectors; Senior Detectives A. Cameron and T. S. C. Kemp, and Senior Sergeants J. W. Hollis and S. Rawle to be Sub-Inspectors. Two sergeants were promoted to the rank of Senior Sergeant, and six constables to the rank of sergeant. Two detectives were promoted to the rank of detective-sergeant and seven acting-detectives to the rank of detective.

Strength of Force.—On the 31st March last the actual strength of the Force was 1,006 permanent members and 20 temporary, as compared with 1,009 permanent and 18 temporary last year, a net decrease of one. As during the year the population increased by about twenty-seven thousand, it will be seen that the Force has not been increased proportionately. Parliament voted the pay of twenty-five additional constables last year, which somewhat relieved the pressure. Officers in charge of districts apply for eighty-nine more men, but that number would bring the strength of the Force up to considerably more than the standard attained for many years past, and higher than I am inclined to recommend at present. The authorized strength of the Auckland City and suburban police has been increased by twelve men recently.

This year at least twenty-five more men will be required, and I am pleased to say that Cabinet has authorized that increase.