

TUBERCULOSIS.

Of the notifiable diseases tuberculosis shows a steady tendency towards decline, the death-rate of 4.55 per 10,000 in 1930 being the lowest so far recorded. This is very satisfactory, and indicates that the methods of dealing with this disease in New Zealand are along the right lines. The public generously subscribed to the Christmas Seal campaign, much credit again being due to the efforts of the Post and Telegraph Department in this connection. With the erection of a permanent health camp at Otaki, facilities will be available in the southern part of the North Island for the treatment of children selected as suffering from mal-nutrition and likely to become victims of tuberculosis. The health camp held at Motuihi Island achieved excellent results on behalf of such children in the Auckland District. The following-up of contacts has been extended considerably. In this sphere the School Medical Service has been particularly active.

OTHER INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

The infectious-disease rates for the past year have been remarkably low. These diseases are fully commented upon by the Director of Public Hygiene in his report. One would welcome a decrease in the number of deaths from diphtheria, and there is every reason to believe that this could be achieved if parents would avail themselves of the facilities to hand to have their children protected by toxin anti-toxin or toxoid.

CANCER.

There is a slight fall in the mortality-rate for this cause, there being fifteen deaths less than in the previous year. The New Zealand Branch of the British Empire Cancer Campaign Society is proving a very active force in dealing with this too prevalent disease. The public have generously subscribed to this organization, and thanks are due to them for their liberal support. The research work being carried out by Dr. A. M. Begg at the Medical School, Dunedin, under the control of a central committee of the society is steadily adding to the knowledge of this disease in New Zealand, and leading, I hope, to its ultimate conquest. Through newspaper articles and displays of posters at post-offices throughout the Dominion, the Department is endeavouring to educate the public as to the signs of cancer and as to the value of early treatment.

MATERNAL WELFARE.

Dr. Paget's report indicates the importance and gravity of this problem, and gives detailed information as to the efforts made and the line of action still necessary for protection of motherhood in this country. As pointed out, the standard of ante-natal care, speaking generally, remains below what is required for safeguarding the mother. Excellent results, however, at the St. Helens Hospitals demonstrate the value of ante-natal care under close medical supervision. Attention is drawn in Dr. Paget's report to the part played by criminal abortion in influencing our unduly high maternal death-rate. This is a matter of grave concern.

Undoubtedly, the standard of our public and private maternity hospitals, and of private hospitals generally, has greatly improved during the last few years. For this result much credit is due to the medical and nursing professions, which have co-operated freely with the Departmental officers working in this field.

HEALTH EDUCATION.

This important and effective field of preventive effort has not been neglected. Health articles continue to be published by the press throughout the Dominion, and of the educational value of these there can be no doubt. From reports received it is evident that these articles assist to lay the foundation for an enlightened public opinion in matters of personal and community health. Newspapers constitute one of the principal mediums for the enlargement of the minds of the people in such matters, and the Department is therefore much indebted to the press for their co-operation in this work. Through the courtesy of the Radio Broadcasting Co. of New Zealand health talks are now being broadcast weekly in the four main centres.

HAWKE'S BAY EARTHQUAKE.

The disastrous earthquake in the Hawke's Bay District was a severe test of the public-hospital system of New Zealand, which was met successfully. The brunt of the work in connection with the care of the injured fell, in the first instance, on the relatively small but devoted band of medical men and nurses in the affected area and on the Hawke's Bay Hospital Board. The gravity of the position was added to by the damage to the public hospital, which necessitated the provision of accommodation for the patients who at the time of the earthquake were in the wards of that institution. Emergency accommodation was rapidly made available at the racecourses in Napier and Hastings, and here everything possible was done for those requiring medical care. In these early hours there was a general attitude of unsparing devotion to duty, and not a few instances of heroism, which showed that the doctors and nurses in the stricken area lived up to the noblest traditions of their respective professions.