

VOTE—MENTAL HOSPITALS DEPARTMENT.

585. The expenditure of this Department, excluding capital expenditure, for 1914-15 and 1930-31 is shown hereunder :—

1914-15.			1930-31.		
Salaries.	Other Charges.	Total.	Salaries.	Other Charges.	Total.
£	£	£	£	£	£
70,278	100,532	170,810	272,007	203,647	475,654
Less credits-in-aid ..		44,828	Less credits-in-aid ..		172,195
		£125,982			£303,459

586. The expenditure has increased by approximately 140 per centum since 1914-15, but the mental hospitals population has also increased materially in the intervening period.

587. The numerical strength of the staff in 1914-15 was 658, and in 1930-31 it was 1,325.

588. While the above figures show a large increase in the cost to the Dominion since 1914-15, other factors must be taken into consideration to arrive at a true comparison. The increase in the number of inmates has contributed very largely to the progressive increase in cost. To show how the problem of the mentally defective has become accentuated over a long period of years it would be as well to quote some statistics. The annual reports of the Department go back to 1876, in which year there were 783 patients in the mental hospitals of the Dominion, or a ratio of approximately 1 : 383 of population. During the intervening years there has been a steadily progressive increase in the number under the care of the Department, as is shown in the following quinquennial table :—

Years.	Average Annual Increase.		Years.	Average Annual Increase.	
1876-80	79	1906-10 .. ..	..	111
1881-85	79	1911-15 .. ..	..	111
1886-90	57	1916-20 .. ..	..	122
1891-95	83	1921-25 .. ..	..	113
1896-1900	91	1926-30 .. ..	..	239
1901-5	90			

589. The ratio of registered mental patients and voluntary boarders to the estimated general population (exclusive of Maoris) may be gathered approximately from the following table showing the position every fifth year over a period of forty years :—

				Number of Patients and Voluntary Boarders on Register.	Estimated Population of New Zealand (exclusive of Maoris).	Ratio of Registered Inmates of Mental Hospitals to General Population.
1891 .. ..	..	..	..	1,849	626,658	1 : 339
1896 .. ..	..	..	..	2,315	703,360	1 : 304
1901 .. ..	..	..	..	2,773	772,719	1 : 279
1906 .. ..	..	..	..	3,206	888,578	1 : 277
1911* .. ..	..	..	..	3,756	1,008,468	1 : 268
1916 .. ..	..	..	..	4,400	1,099,449	1 : 250
1921 .. ..	..	..	..	4,970	1,218,913	1 : 245
1926 .. ..	..	..	..	5,637	1,344,469	1 : 239
1931 .. ..	..	..	..	6,922	1,452,747	1 : 210

* System of voluntary admission instituted.

590. The figures for the 1931 quinquennium convey rather a wrong impression, as the disproportionate increase in the ratio is largely due to alteration in the system rather than a definite increase in the number requiring admission. This discrepancy is due to the operation of the Mental Defectives Amendment Act, 1928, under which the Department is now responsible for the care and training of many feeble-minded children who would in prior years have been under the charge of the Education Department.