

Since the beginning of the current year School Medical Officers have been asked to keep a close watch on the position. Reports to hand are to the effect that while there is little or no increased malnutrition among country children there is a group of city children which is showing some evidence of malnutrition.

To sum up, then, it can be definitely stated—

- (1) Measured by mortality and morbidity rates, the economic crisis has not yet shown any detrimental effect on the public health.
- (2) There has been no increase in the proportion of in-patients treated in public hospitals.
- (3) On the whole, the nutrition of New Zealand school-children has been well maintained, although there is some evidence that a group of city children is showing clinical signs of malnutrition due to the economic position.

ADMINISTRATION.

Close supervision was maintained over departmental expenditure during the year under review. Largely as a result of the low incidence of infectious disease, the net expenditure on recognized public-health services, apart from subsidies to Hospital Boards, again shows a substantial reduction on the expenditure for the preceding financial year.

Reorganization of the Department's activities in the North Auckland District was carried out during the year. Hitherto public-health matters in that area had been controlled from Auckland by a Medical Officer of Health and a School Medical Officer, but these two posts were combined and the duties in connection with them are now carried out by the one Medical Officer stationed at Whangarei. From an economic and administrative point of view this arrangement has proved sound policy. A Medical Officer in charge of a district in which this system of organization is in force comments as follows on the advantages of single control :—

“ Financial saving occurs when one person is executing work formerly occupied by two officers. It might be said, under the circumstances, that the general efficiency of health services would suffer, but in practice this does not appear to be the case, as to a great extent any disability is compensated for by the more central situation of the health officers, necessitating less waste of time in travelling, with decreased travelling-expenses. The personal advantages to a medical officer from single control are many and varied, the greatest, of course, is the larger degree of personal contact with all classes of the community, and with this is associated a better grasp of the many health problems involved.

“ School contact is invaluable in this connection, as there one sees the very beginnings of disease and gets glimpses of the possible causative factors at work, and by health education through the school, and otherwise, or by better sanitary control of the environment, it should be possible to remove many of the dysgenic forces at work, with the resultant benefit to the child and adult population.

“ A possible disadvantage with combined areas is the difficulty experienced in steering a true course through the multitude of problems encountered; individual preferences for certain types of work have to be carefully guarded against, and in this connection school examination could easily assume too dominant a position in the health officer's mind with possible neglect of the older and well proved methods of sanitary control, which has proved so efficacious in the past and will continue to do in the future.”

Public Hygiene.—An important feature of the work of the Division of Public Hygiene was the effort made to bring about co-ordination of public-health work among the various local authorities so as to eliminate possible overlapping and duplication where controlling authorities' responsibilities approach close to each other. General sanitation problems received due attention. Inspection was instituted of chemists' records to see that they comply with the regulations gazetted under the Dangerous Drugs Act.

Special investigations were carried out by Dr. H. B. Turbott—one on the “ Bacteriological Control of Milk-supplies, East Cape Health District,” and, in collaboration with Mr. H. F. Wise, “ The Ice-cream of Gisborne—Bacteriological Control and Sterilization of Factory Equipment.” Reports on these are included in the Appendix.

School Hygiene.—A feature of Dr. Ada Paterson's report is the special endeavour that has been made by the School Medical and Nursing Service to ensure a satisfactory standard of nutrition among school-children. Other activities in the interest of the welfare of children to which attention is drawn in this report are the steps taken for the prevention of tuberculosis and diphtheria. The goitre problem has continued to receive constant attention.

Nursing.—Miss Lambie in her report outlines steps taken to improve the standard of nursing in New Zealand, and in doing so emphasizes the value of the establishment of the post-graduate course for nurses.

Dental Hygiene.—One hundred and seventy-nine additional schools were placed under dental supervision, and there was an increase of 4,411 in the number of children who received systematic treatment during the year. The rapidly falling ratio of teeth extracted for every one hundred fillings performed is a gratifying feature of the Director's report.