

The Housing Problem and the New Public Health Amendment Bill.

The recent epidemic seems to have done something to wake up our legislators to the fact that something is wrong in a country when an epidemic such as we have recently gone through, has such fatal results. The Public Health Amendment Bill as finally passed by Parliament gives wide powers to the Health Department with regard to the housing of the people.

A Public Health Board is constituted, consisting of the Minister of Public Health, the Chief Health Officer, the president of the British Medical Association for New Zealand, the head of the medical clinic at Otago University, the officer in charge of local government in the Department of Internal Affairs, and five nominated members holding office for three years.

It will be the duty of this board to report to the Minister:-

(a) Upon methods or developments in national health which in the opinion of the board it is desirable to introduce into New Zealand;

(b) Upon any matters concerning the medical services, on instruction in health matters, suggested amendments in the law, the relation of the Public Health Department to local government authorities, the training of medical practitioners, dentists, nurses, and masseurs; and

(c) Upon any other matters in connection with public health referred to it by the Minister.

The Minister may set up district advisory committees to report on such matters as he may refer to it. The district health officers and district presidents of the Medical Association will be *ex officio* members, the remaining members being nominated by the Minister.

Lodging-Houses.

Any local authority may establish lodging-houses within or near its own boundaries. The land required for the purpose may be taken under the Public Works Act, 1908, and the money required for the purchase of the land and the erection and furnishing of the buildings may be raised under the Local Bodies' Loans Act, 1913, by special order.

The local authority may either let the lodging-houses or itself maintain and administer them. The local authority may, with the approval of the Minister, make by-laws for the conduct of all such lodging-houses.

Unhealthy Buildings.

Upon the certificate of the district health officer that any building or part of a building is in a condition unfit for occupation or dangerous to public health, the local authority shall give notice to the owner to pull down the same within the time named in the notice, not exceeding eight weeks.

In lieu of requiring the owner to pull down any insanitary building, the District health officer may require the owner to make structural alterations or additions to the building or improvements to the

sanitary conditions. The owner of the building may appeal to a Magistrate. The decision of the Magistrate shall be final, and he shall make such order as to costs as he thinks fit.

If any such appeal is not allowed, or if there is no such appeal, and the owner fails to pull down the building within the time named in the notice, the local authority shall cause the building to be pulled down, and may recover from the owner all expenses incurred under this section.

If the local authority fails within two months after notice to take action has been delivered by the district health officer, the district health officer shall proceed to exercise all the powers conferred on the local authority.

Inspection of Buildings.

Any local authority may make by-laws providing for the inspection of any building before being occupied by a new owner or tenant.

The local authority shall appoint a competent inspector of buildings, whose duty it shall be to inspect every building. The inspector shall report to the local authority as to the condition of every occupied building in the district, and in particular as to: Area of land occupied and air-space, water supply, baths, lavatories, sanitary and hygiene conditions, the name of the owner, the name and occupation of the occupier, the number and description of the rooms, the number of persons living in the building, if rented the rental payable, and such other information as may be ordered by the local authority.

Insanitary Buildings.

The district health officer may report to the local authority and Board of Health upon the necessity of improving any part of a district under the provisions of Section 293 of the Municipal Corporations Act, 1908. If the local authority neglects or refuses to take action within three months the Board of Health shall hold a public inquiry into the matter. The report of the Board of Health shall be transmitted to the Minister, who shall forward a copy of it to the local authority. The local authority shall consider the report of the Board of Health and forward to the Minister its decision thereupon. If the local authority approves the recommendations of the Board of Health, it shall proceed with all reasonable speed to give effect thereto. If the local authority still refuses or neglects for the period of one year to proceed continuously thereunder, the Minister may request the Minister of Public Works to carry out the report of the Board of Health at the cost of the local authority. To give effect to this clause it shall not be necessary for the local authority to take a poll of the ratepayers in connection with any loan that may be required.

Overcrowding.

On and after February 1, 1919, it shall not be lawful for any person—

(a) To take in more than five lodgers at any one time for board and residence, either temporary or permanent, unless the premises have been licensed