

New Zealand School Dental Service has become intensified, and during the past year numerous requests have been received from abroad for full details of the system. These inquiries culminated in a visit in March, 1949, from a delegation of dental experts sent by the Australian Commonwealth Government, and accompanied by the Commonwealth Director-General of Health, to investigate personally the dental services in New Zealand.

It would be fitting to refer in this report to the Seventh Pacific Science Congress, which was held in New Zealand in February, 1949. Dental Officers of this Division not only attended the Congress, but they also organized and contributed to the dental symposium, under the Public Health and Nutrition Section of the Congress.

#### STAFF

At the 31st March, 1949, the staff of the Dental Division numbered 759.

During the year, the senior staff of the Dental Division was strengthened by the arrival of seven dental surgeons from the United Kingdom. Of the twenty applicants who had been offered appointment, only eight accepted, and the remaining one is expected to arrive shortly. In addition, nine graduates of the Otago University Dental School who had held Health Department bursaries joined the staff of the Division in accordance with the provisions of their bursary agreement. There is still an acute shortage of experienced senior staff suitably qualified for appointment to teaching and higher administrative positions.

Reference was made in the last annual report to the threatened shortage of school dental nurses in relation to the rapid increase in the school population, resulting from the unusually high birth-rate during the previous few years. Although the actual number of dental nurses in the field is about the same (451, as against 440 twelve months before), this number is now quite inadequate to cope with the needs of the rapidly growing school population. At the date of this report the shortage of dental nurses is estimated at 150, and by 1952, when the number of children entering the schools is expected to reach its peak, an increase of at least 300 dental nurses will be required. Plans to alleviate the situation have been formulated, and steps are being taken to put them into operation, but, at the best, no substantial relief can be expected for three or four years. A limited measure of relief is hoped for shortly by (i) an appeal to ex-dental nurses to rejoin the Service, and (ii) arranging with the dental profession to transfer some of the upper primary-school classes temporarily to their care under social security. This will be purely an emergency measure, and all primary- and intermediate-school patients will revert to the care of the School Dental Service as soon as the staff necessary is available.

The senior staff was strengthened during the year by the appointment of a Principal Dental Officer (Orthodontics) to direct this important branch of dental health service.

Reference to staff would be incomplete without recording the retirement on superannuation in January, 1949, of Miss E. M. Haines, who was a member of the original draft of dental nurse trainees appointed in 1921, and who for twenty-five years was Matron, first of the old Training School of Dental Nurses at Government Buildings, Wellington, and later of the Tinakori Road section of the Dominion Training School.

#### ADOLESCENT DENTAL SERVICE

The provision of organized dental care for adolescents has now operated for two complete years and is giving general satisfaction. Minor problems arise from time to time, but the experience gained so far has not revealed any fundamental weakness in the organization that was originally devised. Wherever possible, dental care for adolescents is provided by full-time dental officers of the Department working in State clinics. The development of this service is retarded by the difficulty of securing staff, and by delays in building and in obtaining equipment. For the present, most of the full-time dental officers are stationed in school clinics attached to intermediate schools, where facilities for the full development of their work are necessarily restricted.