

In the *schedule of offensive trades* it would be of assistance were nightsoil services to be included. At present our powers over contractors are very vague. The Health Officer should have power of veto in the matter of all nightsoil-depots.—Further, there is nothing in the Health Act to enable one to prosecute a contractor who deposits nightsoil on roads or private premises. The only jurisdiction in the latter case is to prosecute the occupier, who is the sufferer from the other's carelessness.

The time allowed (seventy-two hours) in section 56, subsection (4), which must elapse before a householder can take action against the Council or their contractors, is surely too long. Where a privy is not cleaned, or a defective pan is provided, twenty-four hours should be sufficient notice.

It would be well were part of the fine where a person is convicted of committing a nuisance to go to the local body. This might encourage them to greater efforts. At present it is most difficult to get a Board or Council to take action, and though we can proceed if they make default this introduces a complication in the case.

THE SANITARY DISTRICTS.

Auckland City.

I regret that I cannot report any very great advance in the sanitation of the city during the year. With the highest death-rate of the four centres, one might reasonably ask for a moderate amount of zeal in sanitary reform. Yet all the greater questions have been shelved—the abattoirs, the refuse-destroyer, the improved-drainage question, and so on. Doubtless this is due in part to the expenditure of funds and energy over the electric tramways and the paving of Queen Street, which should perhaps be classed as a sanitary work, as certainly much of the sewer-gas odour formerly noticeable in that street is now gone.

As regards *drainage*, a certain amount of money has been spent in the outlying parts of the city in laying sewers, but these still reproduce the old faults, being costly tunnels on the combined system, too large for the sewage, and too small for the storm-waters. I must emphatically dissent from the opinion expressed by the City Engineer in his report that this system is the best one for Auckland. Indeed, the result of a very heavy rainfall in January was a sufficient answer to this opinion. The sewers on this occasion burst in many places, flooding streets and cellars with filth. The basements at the lower end of Queen Street suffered more especially, and in one case where the screw tops on the gully-traps had held out the result was that the house-drain burst and tore up the floor. The pollution of the harbour is in itself sufficiently serious to warrant the abolition of this antiquated and dangerous method of sewage-conveyance.

Of the house connections nothing complimentary can be said. The drains are laid according to the ideas of the contractor, and are passed without the faintest semblance of a test. When the testing apparatus had been obtained by the Department I wrote placing it at the disposal of the Council, but no advantage was taken of this offer. Of the plumbing the less said the better. I can only hope that when the new by-laws are passed the Council will give such assistance to their officers as will enable them to insure that these laws are carried out. The influence of the teaching of the Technical School may also have the effect of introducing modern methods into the ever-mysterious ways of the plumbing fraternity.

The *nightsoil service* has gone from bad to worse during the year. What was originally intended for a closed-pan system is now nullified by the fact that a fair proportion of the pans fail to prove watertight, while in a large percentage the lids no longer fit. The result is a serious menace to the health of the city, and one which should not be tolerated for another year. The contract system has nothing to recommend it, and I cannot see why city and suburbs should not combine in this matter to form a Board to deal with nightsoil-removal on a sound basis. In no direction could money be more usefully spent; and, with uniformity of method in the various districts, a single depot and an up-to-date plant would not cost such a serious amount as to make the scheme impracticable. An attempt was made by the Department to secure improvement as regards the depot. In last report I indicated my objections to the present system, and suggested water-carriage to some isolated spot as one way of dealing with the trouble. From the first I have been opposed to the Point Chevalier depot, and the prospect of the Infectious Diseases Hospital being placed out there afforded a sufficient reason for making an effort to give effect to this. A conference was held during one of Dr. Mason's visits to consider the question of a depot, and a visit was paid to an island up the harbour, to which as a depot certainly no objection could be taken on the grounds of health. The contractors were willing to combine in carrying out this scheme; but, like many suggested reforms in Auckland, the effort came to nothing—the Council would not support it; and the last state of the city is worse than the first.

Refuse-removal.—The destructor question hangs fire, except that a site in Mechanics' Bay has been selected. The position is not very central, but with strict attention to detail there should be no offence caused by the destructor being placed here.

No improvement has been made in the method of collection of refuse or in the household receptacles. These matters, I am told, will be considered when the destructor is being erected. By-laws on the subject are not included in the new draft.

I have found it necessary to protest against the method in vogue of disposing of road-scrappings. These, including the contents of the water-table silt-traps, are placed on any convenient vacant allotment requiring filling in to make it available for building purposes. What the effect on the health of the inhabitants of houses built on such foundations might be does not apparently concern the Council or the owners of the land. Some of these deposits are very offensive, and are in populous areas. To my protests the Council replied that to cart the stuff further afield would entail a very large expenditure. As a compromise, however, they undertook to cover up the filth with clean soil from time to time.