

One is frequently confronted with a difficulty as regards enforcing these condemnation certificates when the property is a leasehold—a long lease which perhaps expires in a few years. In such conditions it is somewhat hard on the lessee to make him pull down his building, as it is evident it will not pay him to rebuild for the few remaining years of his lease. In such cases it is necessary to be content with a few repairs, to make the place as sanitary as possible till the term of ownership expires.

At the present day building by-laws are more strict than formerly, and this, with the gradual elimination of the older haphazard style of building, should simplify matters for the District Health Officers of the future. Where, however, the local authority has neglected to make by-laws it is difficult to stop the perpetration of crimes of the jerry-building type. It would be desirable were the Health Department enabled to exercise a general supervision over the erection of all habitable houses. Thus, we frequently find ruinous houses being removed from a city and re-erected in a suburban district where by-laws do not exist. If the house has been condemned we have power to interfere under section 11 of "The Public Health Amendment Act, 1903," but if it has been pulled down voluntarily by the owner our powers seem vague; and when we find a builder using decayed and filthy material from such a house we can only wait till the building is complete and then issue a condemnation certificate, which seems rather a roundabout way of securing our object. One such instance occurred during the year at Johnsonville, but in this case the owner has agreed to our representations, and the defective material is to be eliminated. However, it would be a simple matter to give the District Health Officer power to condemn any unsuitable material about to be used for building purposes. Where the local authority had good building by-laws, and enforced them, there would be no need for the Department to interfere.

Then, again, it should be within the power of the Department to demand a satisfactory water-supply for every habitable house. We have no powers as to this whatsoever, yet in England, where the Public Health authorities are not supposed to be in as strong a position as we are, the medical officer of health can prohibit the use of a house which is not satisfactorily supplied with water.

As regards overcrowding, I need only refer to my report of last year, in which I suggested that general standards should be fixed by Act of Parliament, of general application, the limitation of area being graded according to the sanitary equipment of the district. Of course, such laws could only be made to apply to future subdivisions, and not to already thickly populated places. This was the subject of a special report supplied to you during the year, and model by-laws referring to the same matter have been drawn up and supplied to various growing towns.

As regards the size of sleeping-rooms also, I suggested a general standard to prevent overcrowding, one which was to take special cognisance of floor-space. One frequently has to combat a popular error that a lofty room is necessarily a well-ventilated one. Several local bodies have, with a commendable zeal for sanitation, made the error of placing too much emphasis on the height of the stud, but have neglected to ask for adequate window-space or other means of ventilation. I do not think the minimum from floor to ceiling should be fixed so high as 10 ft. One knows of many rooms no higher than 8 ft. 6 in. or 9 ft., which no one could possibly consider cramped or ill ventilated. Indeed, such low-ceiled rooms are generally preferable from the artistic point of view. All that is required is that the window-area should be ample, that both sashes be hung, and that the top of the window come to within 12 in. of the ceiling. An excellent demonstration of the value of ample open window-space was obtained during the observations I made at the Wanganui Collegiate School, on behalf of the Commission of Inquiry which was held during the past year. In this school the dormitories, though old-fashioned in type, and with a cubic space per head just within the accepted standards, are remarkably well ventilated—the percentage of carbonic acid, even after some hours' occupation, being in most cases little higher than that of the outside air. The secret of this is that there are plenty of windows, and these are kept open all night.

SANITATION OF HOTELS.

The sanitary supervision of licensed houses has hitherto been one of the many burdens borne by the Police Force; but a police officer, though doubtless well able to report on general cleanliness and so forth, is not necessarily an expert in matters of plumbing and other technical questions. Accordingly, an attempt is being made to utilise the officers of the Health Department by co-operating with the Police and Licensing Benches in this direction. The proposal emanated, I believe, from the Chairman of the Wairarapa Licensing Committee, and a systematic report on the sanitation of all the hotels of that district was made, with the satisfactory result that practically all the suggestions of the Department were adopted by the Committee. Encouraged by this, the same course was adopted in the Marlborough District, and again our efforts met with the commendation of the Committee. You thereupon circularised all the licensing authorities in the Wellington Province, with the result that practically all welcomed this system of co-operation, which is certain to lead to a much higher standard of sanitation than has hitherto obtained in hotels, more especially in country districts. The work has been specially intrusted to Mr. Schauer, our Chief Inspector, whose reports have shown thoroughness in detail and sound judgment, and have won for him well-merited praise. So far 196 hotels have been reported on, comprising thirty-three hotels in the Wairarapa district and twenty-five in the Marlborough district. Special reports also have been furnished on certain hotels in Wellington City and Upper Hutt.

DRAINAGE-WORK AND DISPOSAL OF REFUSE.

Much work has been done in many of the growing towns in the province in the matter of providing modern sewerage, and several prospective works have been planned and approved. Carterton, Pahiatua, and Lower Hutt are now sewered, and many houses are connected. For Eketahuna and Picton plans have been prepared, and the more important parts of the town are now drained.