

*Drainage.*

During the last year the Drainage Board obtained authority from the ratepayers to raise a loan of £100,000. Out of this loan several new works had been authorised, including the laying of sewers in the St. Albans Ward. During the last year 341 houses were connected with the sewers, and 353 containing water-closets were connected. Nothing approaching the full use is yet being made of the sewerage system. In the Central Ward and St. Albans Ward most of the houses are connected with the sewer where sewers exist. In Linwood and Sydenham the reverse is the case: the sewers have been laid for about twenty years, but in one block in Linwood it was found that there were 30 houses connected to 66 chains of sewers, while 82 houses that could connect had not done so. In another block in Sydenham 4 houses had connected to 36 chains of sewer, while there were 67 houses that were not connected. The same conditions exist throughout Linwood and Sydenham to the same or a less extent. Owing to the Drainage Board laying the sewers, and the City Council not enforcing connection, miles of sewers lie idle, and might just as well not have been laid. Household drainage still is unnecessarily discharged into side channels, and thence into storm-water creeks, where it causes a nuisance.

*Milk-supply.*

During the year the City Council set up a special committee to inquire into the question of municipalising the local milk-supply. The gist of the report of this committee is that the present dual control of the Agricultural Department and the Health Department is unsatisfactory; that legislation is necessary before milk districts and municipalisation of the milk-supply can be established; and that, "as both the Agricultural Department and the Health Department are now giving their serious attention to this question, and as we understand regulations affecting the question are now before the Cabinet, it would perhaps be best that the Council take no further steps towards the municipalisation of the milk-supply until it is shown that the regulations of the Department are not sufficient to attain the end we have in view—namely, the delivery of absolutely pure milk." It is worthy of remark that the report contains no allusion to the powers that the City Council already have, or to the powers that they might obtain, under sections 346 and 404 of "The Municipal Corporations Act, 1900."

From an ideal point of view I have no doubt that the complete municipalisation of the milk-supply would lead to a great improvement in the purity of the milk, if it was carried out under proper expert supervision, and the question of expense did not have to be taken into consideration. There would, however, be considerable opposition from those persons with vested interests in the trade, even if the scheme was to be carried out without any extra cost to the ratepayer or consumer. In any case, however, the actual cost would be a large sum, probably approaching that of a water-supply, and this money could not be obtained without the sanction of the ratepayers. I do not think it is likely, and at all events it would be difficult to prove, that the price of milk would not be increased, and therefore I consider that there would be no chance of obtaining the consent of the ratepayers to the municipalisation of the milk-supply at the present time. The establishment of a depot or of depots under municipal or other control is much more feasible; but if this scheme was tried, I consider that the matter should be dealt with on the ordinary principle of supply and demand in the first instance, rather than by coercive legislation. If there were three or four depots in Christchurch where a milk-supply could be guaranteed by the controlling authority—that is, the Stock Department, Health Department, or local authority—to be produced, delivered, and stored under the best possible conditions, pure milk would be available for infants, invalids, or any persons who desired it. It is possible, but not certain, that this milk would have to be sold at a slightly higher price. If these depots were established, and there was no demand for the pure milk, it would obviously be useless for the local authority to go to the ratepayers for their consent to raise a loan to institute a larger scheme of municipalising the milk-supply. If, on the contrary, the demand for this pure milk increased, and a large number of persons availed themselves of the opportunity of obtaining this milk, it might be advisable to consider the placing of the larger and more expensive scheme before the ratepayers.

This matter of making a supply of pure milk available in Christchurch for any one who wished to obtain pure milk was discussed by the Inspector of Dairies (Mr. A. Macpherson) and myself, and I understand that a special set of regulations has been drawn up by the Stock Department. Compliance with these regulations would insure the cows themselves being perfectly healthy, the milking being carried on under the best conditions, and the delivery of milk in town and storage in town being also carried out under the best conditions. It would be open to any dairyman to state his willingness to comply with these regulations, and if he did so comply he could obtain a certificate from the Stock Department or controlling authority that his milk was produced under the best conditions possible; this certificate would be revoked for any serious failure in complying with the regulations. Only a few of the larger dairy-farmers would be able or willing to comply with these regulations, but a supply of pure milk would then be available for any one who wished to obtain it.

This scheme of "certified dairies" is no new scheme, and I understand it has worked well in other countries where it has been tried.

*WOOLSTON.*

A considerable improvement has taken place during the last year in the drainage of the Borough of Woolston. A large amount of concrete channelling has been put down, which is a great improvement on the dirty stagnant ditches which were previously abundant.

*LYTTELTON.*

The dispute between the Harbour Board and the Borough Council with regard to the drainage of storm-water and sewage into the harbour has at last been satisfactorily settled, and I understand