

GENERAL.

On the 18th August, 1920, the Right Hon. W. F. Massey, Prime Minister, handed over the administration of the Police Department to the Hon. E. P. Lee, Minister of Justice.

During the year from the 1st April, 1920, to the 31st March, 1921, the following promotions took place: 1st December, 1920—Sub-Inspector Dew to Inspector. 1st January, 1921—Sub-Inspectors Mathieson, Hutton, Wohlmann, Emerson, and Cassells to Inspectors; Senior Sergeants Eales, Muggeridge, Murray, and Willis to Sub-Inspectors. Eight sergeants were promoted to the rank of Senior Sergeant, and eight constables were promoted to the rank of sergeant. Fourteen constables were appointed detectives.

Increase in Districts.—The policy, referred to in my reports of 1919 and 1920, of reducing the area of large districts has been carried a further stage, and three new districts have been formed during the year—viz., Whangarei (1st May, 1920) and Gisborne and New Plymouth (1st January, 1921). Smaller and more manageable districts have been the result of the subdivision, and the fruits of the policy are evident in the closer attention to supervision which Inspectors are now able to give. The benefits will be still greater as time goes on. A corollary to that policy is the extension of the jurisdiction of Superintendents, which hitherto was confined to their own districts. The four Superintendents located at the four principal cities have had their authority extended to the Inspectors' Districts in the vicinity, and the Dominion has been divided amongst them in four police divisions as follows: Wellington Division, including the Districts of Wellington, Wanganui, New Plymouth, Palmerston North, and Napier; Auckland Division, including the Districts of Auckland, Whangarei, Hamilton, and Gisborne; Canterbury Division, including the Districts of Christchurch, Timaru, and Greymouth; Otago Division, including the Districts of Dunedin and Invercargill.

For administration purposes the four cities are the local headquarters of the districts included in the respective divisions. Certain special functions have been assigned to the Superintendents, while the responsibility of each Inspector has been maintained intact. An effect of the rearrangement of districts is that the number of Sub-Inspectors is reduced from seven to four; while the number of districts under the charge of Inspectors has been increased from eleven to fourteen. Sub-Inspectors are now required only at the four cities.

Administration of Samoa.—At the request of the Hon. the Minister of External Affairs, Sub-Inspector Wohlmann was transferred to the Samoan Administration, and was appointed Commissioner of Police of Western Samoa.

Discipline.—One sergeant was reduced in rank, two constables were compelled to resign, and three constables were dismissed. The conduct of the Force on the whole has been very good.

Loss.—The total loss of men from all causes was fifty-eight, equal to 6.576 per cent. The proportion in the Metropolitan Police Force of London was 6.645 per cent. Notwithstanding the increase in the numerical strength of the Force, this number has been practically constant since 1906, in which year the highest record was attained—viz., sixty-six.

Training Recruits.—It is gratifying to be able to report that the training-depot, Rintoul Street, was reopened on the 17th May this year, when a class of twenty-five men was received for training. A class of fifty men is at present undergoing instruction, and a class of thirty is called up for training on the 1st December. It is hoped that these additions will go a long way towards filling the shortage in numbers to which officers in charge of districts draw attention, as well as to meet fresh demands from places not provided with police.

The provisions of the Police Force Amendment Act, 1919, enabling temporary constables to be appointed, proved to be very useful during the time the training-depot was closed. Men who were recruited but not trained were sworn in as temporary constables and put on probation for a period of three months, during which they received what instruction was possible together with practical work and experience. The system worked fairly well, and was the best possible in the circumstances; but the contrast between it and the system of training in the depot served to emphasize the great value of the latter. The type of recruits offering is very good on the whole; many of them are at or near the minimum age, which is a distinct advantage in that they are more amenable to training, discipline, and instruction than men who approach the maximum age, many of whom desire to join the Police Force in the hope of finding it a "soft job" after failure or disappointment in other callings.

The number of temporary constables taken on under the provisions of the War Legislation Amendment Act, 1916, section 32, and now remaining in the service is eighteen.

Housing.—The question of housing members of the Force is still acute, but, owing to the recruiting of a large number of young unmarried men who are accommodated in the barracks of the principal cities, a degree of relief will be experienced presently as the married constables are moved into country stations.

In my former reports I drew attention to the expediency of providing married constables in the cities with residences in the immediate vicinity of the stations to which they are assigned. The reasons then put forward still hold good, for there will always be a good proportion of married constables in the cities. Their tendency naturally is to seek for houses in the more remote outskirts of the cities, in order to secure better conditions as regard rent and environment. The effect is to render mobilization for emergencies, such as great fires, &c., difficult and slow. A good deal has been done within the last five years as regards acquiring residences for officers in charge of districts, and non-commissioned officers in charge of stations. Premises for police-stations in the country districts have also been purchased when favourable conditions existed. It is desirable to carry this process on until the Department is equipped with its own property throughout the Dominion, but in the present financial conditions I refrain from urging anything but what is absolutely essential.