

POLICE BUILDINGS, ETC.

The following works in connection with police-stations have been carried out during the year by the Public Works Department:—

New police-stations were erected at Hawera, Inglewood, and Mohaka, a lock-up at Putaruru, and a lock-up and stable at Tuatapere.

Renovations, alterations, and improvements were effected at Whangarei, Dargaville, Hikurangi, Kaikohe, Mangonui, Rawene, Russell, Auckland Central, Mount Eden, Mount Eden South, Newmarket, Northcote, Whitianga, Cambridge, Freeman's Bay, Hamilton, Huntly, Kawakawa, Kingsland, Matamata, Taihape, Ohakune, Mangaweka, Waitotara, Birkenhead, Tauranga, Whakatane, Katikati, Napier, Gisborne, Port Awanui, Taradale, Ormondville, Hastings, Waipawa, Porangahau, Te Kuiti, Clive, Stratford, Eltham, New Plymouth, Fitzroy, Hawera, Manaia, Patea, Wanganui, St. John's, Wanganui East, Otaki, Weraroa, Levin, Seatoun, Pahiatua, Masterton, Picton, Greymouth, Millerton, Blackball, Richmond, Kaikoura, Rangiora, Waimate, Cheviot, Arrowtown, Dunedin, Invercargill, Clyde, Pembroke, Roslyn, Bluff, and Waikaia.

GENERAL.

Arms Act, 1920.—This Act, which came into force in January, 1921, entailed a great amount of work upon the police, but this is decreasing with the completion of the original registrations and as persons who have, or desire to obtain, firearms are becoming educated to the provisions of the Act.

The system of registration has revealed the fact that there was an extraordinary number of firearms in the Dominion; and, though none but automatic pistols were called in, there is no doubt that in the course of time a strict but fair and uniform enforcement of the Act will result in a reduction in the number of firearms in proportion to the increased population, and also a considerable reduction in the number of cases in which the more dangerous class of firearms is in the possession of irresponsible persons and others who have no legitimate use for such weapons. The consequent effect of this should be fewer accidents, less use of firearms in committing crime, and greater safety for the public generally.

I might add that I have noticed that in other countries it has been realized that drastic restrictions in regard to possessing and carrying firearms are necessary.

Buildings.—Repairs and renovations have been effected at many stations during the year, but there is still room for improvement in this direction. Expenditure has been kept down to the lowest since the commencement of the war, with the result that an increase is now overdue and must be faced, otherwise buildings will go from bad to worse, and instead of being repaired will have to be replaced by new ones.

There are about forty police-stations rented at places where stations will always be required, and departmental buildings should be built or purchased as money is available.

Candidates.—Applicants to join the Police have not been as numerous as could be desired, although sufficient have offered during the year to fill vacancies. There have not been enough, however, to enable the best selection to be made, and, instead of all the accepted candidates being well over the regulation measurements, some have only just come up to the standard.

The fact that some of the Australian Police Forces are paying higher wages than are paid in New Zealand does not assist recruiting here, nor does it tend to keep men in this Force. In some cases men are known to have resigned for the purpose of joining other Forces at higher wages.

As it costs approximately £100 to train a constable in New Zealand before he can be looked upon as efficient, the loss of trained men is a serious and expensive matter. There has been an unusually large number of resignations during the year of young members of the Force, and the reason given for resigning is almost invariably that they can better themselves outside the Force.

Detective Branch.—Since my last report the regulation requiring constables to serve two years in the uniform branch before being employed on detective duties has been revoked, and suitable men can now be detailed for detective duties under a Chief Detective at any time after their appointment. The alteration has proved beneficial in more ways than one, and I am satisfied that it was a step in the right direction. Young men full of zeal are required in the Detective Branch, and their selection should not be fettered by any unnecessary restrictions. The Detective Force at present is in a very satisfactory state, and their work during the year has demonstrated that they are able to deal with intricate and difficult cases with credit to themselves and the Department.

For some years past the detectives have complained of the inadequate allowances made to them, and I trust that something will be done in this direction before long to make them a more contented body.

Discipline.—Discipline has been well maintained throughout the Force during the year, and the conduct of all ranks, with few exceptions, has been satisfactory.

Drunkenness.—There has been a very noticeable decrease in the number of persons arrested for drunkenness during the year, the figures being 6,409, as against 8,671 in 1921. The decrease is spread over the whole Dominion. This is the least number of persons arrested in any year since 1899, and is less than half the number arrested in 1914 and 1915 respectively.

Gaming Offences.—There have been 65 prosecutions against persons for keeping common gaming-houses and unlawful betting during the year, as compared with 43 in 1921. Of the 65 prosecuted, 52 were convicted. Those convicted for keeping common gaming-houses were mostly bookmakers. There was also one prosecution for following the occupation of bookmaker, but the accused was acquitted by a jury.

King's Police Medal.—This medal has been awarded by His Majesty to Constables F. J. O'Donoghue, No. 1768, and R. J. Wilson, No. 1823, both stationed at Wanganui, for bravely arresting two armed burglars who had broken into a store there and were caught in the act. Both offenders fired at the