

EPIDEMIC DISEASES.

As reported last year, there was no marked incidence of any of the usual epidemic diseases. I am pleased to again report of even better results for the year just closed. The most serious menace to Maori health is typhoid fever, and during the year the largest numbers affected in any one locality were fifteen, with an occasional case here and there throughout the Dominion. It is gratifying to know that the outbreak of the fifteen cases was not considered to be due to evil sanitary conditions, but probably to an infection from shell-fish carted there and consumed. Notwithstanding this occurrence and the fact that sporadic cases present themselves from time to time, there is little doubt but that the incidence of the disease is becoming less and less, these conditions being assisted by the improved sanitary methods being carried out, together with continued inoculation of the people.

Inoculations, like improved sanitary measures, are proceeding as a routine matter. We still meet with some opposition to inoculation, which in many instances can be traced to the followers of the Ratana movement; but in this respect, speaking generally, these objections are gradually being overcome, partly by persuasion of the departmental officers, and possibly by the waning of the Ratana teachings.

MAORI HEALTH COUNCILS.

These bodies continue to do excellent work, more especially so in the direction of the improvement of sanitary conditions within the villages and financial assistance towards the installation of water-supplies. In addition to carrying out their ordinary routine duties as defined under the Maori Council Act and regulations made thereunder, they are ever ready and willing to co-operate with the Department in all matters relative to health conditions generally.

With our twenty Councils of seven members to each, and 260 Village Committees of five members, it will be observed that we have an organization of over 1,400 Natives ever ready to assist in any emergency or cause the Department may think necessary. Most of these bodies consist of the more enlightened Natives, and are a valuable asset, especially in dealing with any serious epidemic. The supervision and advice given by the Division is fairly heavy, and the office-work incidental thereto occupies a good deal of time and thought, but the results are reflected in the good work accomplished, and as such we cannot afford to lose their most valuable services.

In inoculation work the services of our Councils are given freely, and are of most valued help in the locating and rounding-up of those to be treated. In many instances conveyances of the Chairman or members have been placed at the disposal of departmental officers in pursuance of their duties, and their own personal assistance given gratis.

A good deal of opposition is still encountered by our Councils and their Village Committees by the continued attempts of the Ratana element to usurp the powers and functions of the Maori Councils Act. In many instances these Ratana committees operate much to the detriment of our legally constituted bodies. However, by the determination of our Chairman and members, these Ratana organizations are becoming less passive; but constant supervision is still necessary to keep them from becoming a real pest in the administration of the Act under which our Councils function. The Division continues its propaganda work amongst the people and by continued visits hopes to educate the misguided elements into departmental procedure in dealing with the Native people.

The Councils, with their organizations, spread as they are over the Dominion, are an enormous factor in the general uplift of the Maori people, as not only do they function as Maori local authorities, but exercise general supervision over the moral welfare of the race, provision for which has been made under the Act administered by our Councils. The Act and by-laws are at all times administered in a reasonable manner, but with sufficient authority to satisfy delinquents that the Maori Councils Act, like any other Act, must be strictly obeyed. The dictum of these bodies is respected, and it is on rare occasions they have to resort to the Magistrate's Court to enforce their decisions.

REGISTRATION OF BIRTHS AND DEATHS.

The Division works in conjunction with the Registrar-General in this matter, and it is here where our Maori Council organizations render valuable service in seeking the necessary information and effecting registration.

Regarding the registration of deaths, many inquiries are submitted by the Registrar-General to this Division to ascertain the probable cause of death, as the information is rarely supplied at the time registration is effected, owing to a great number of the cases not being attended by a medical man. We are, as a rule, able to obtain sufficient information to permit of a tentative diagnosis acceptable for registration purposes; but, reliable though the information gathered may be, I am compelled to state that such a system is one that is far from satisfactory. I am in agreement with my predecessor in office when he stated in last year's report "Where any Native died without being attended by a medical man or a departmental nurse an inquest should be held," believing it to be the only solution of safeguarding the Native people against the treatment of unqualified persons and *tohungas*. The expense entailed may in many cases be prohibitive; but if this procedure were known to the Natives I believe the matter of calling in either a medical man or a departmental nurse would soon be given effect to, knowing how abhorrent to the Maori mind an inquest is, and especially a post-mortem examination upon the dead.

The isolation of many of the villages has now been removed by the opening-up of the country by improved roading-facilities, and thus medical aid is more easily obtained. Cases of neglect to seek medical or nursing advice that have ended fatally continue to be revealed, and in a very great number of instances were from the misguided elements of the Ratana following. Compulsory registration will and does not solve the question. I am of opinion the cause of death should be demanded before burial, and where no medical advice has been given, then an inquest is the only means available for judging