

## LEGISLATION.

For some years the organized opticians have been seeking to obtain statutory recognition and registration, and this has been established by the Opticians Act, 1928. The object of the Act is to ensure that the optician is so trained that he can be permitted to test defects in vision, to prescribe the remedial lenses for such defects, and this training includes a sufficient knowledge of diseases of the eye to enable him to know when the case is one which must be referred to an oculist. The Opticians Board has held three meetings, and fifty-nine names have been entered upon the Register of Opticians to date.

## STAFF.

It is with deep regret that I have to record the deaths of Mr. S. H. Sargeant and Mr. C. A. Schauer, steadfast Inspectors of Health, who had most loyally served the Department.

In conclusion, I wish to pay a tribute to the very excellent and faithful service rendered by officers of the Department during a particularly strenuous year, calling for unremitting vigilance and economic administration.

T. H. A. VALINTINE, Director-General of Health.

## PART II.—PUBLIC HYGIENE.

I have the honour to submit my annual report for the year ended 31st March, 1929.

## SECTION 1.—VITAL STATISTICS.

## POPULATION.

The mean population of the Dominion for 1928 (exclusive of Maoris) was estimated to be 1,390,684. This total represents an increase over the corresponding figure for the previous year of 16,245, or a percentage increase of population of 1.18.

## BIRTHS.

The births of 27,200 living children were registered in the Dominion during 1928, as against 27,881 in 1927. The birth-rate for 1928 was thus 19.56 per 1,000 of mean population.

The general course of the birth-rate during the last ten years is shown in the following table:—

*Births (Number and Rate) in New Zealand, 1919–28.*

Year.	Total Number of Births registered.	Birth-rate per 1,000 of Mean Population.
1919	24,483	21.42
1920	29,921	25.09
1921	28,567	23.34
1922	29,006	23.17
1923	27,967	21.94
1924	28,014	21.57
1925	28,153	21.17
1926	28,473	21.05
1927	27,881	20.29
1928	27,200	19.56

The birth-rate steadily declines. There were 27,200 births for a population of 1,390,684, and there were 11,811 deaths, the difference, or natural increase, being 15,389 persons, or 1.1 per cent. only of the total population. Back in 1870 the natural increase was 3.1 per cent.

## DEATHS.

The total number of deaths (11,811) registered during the year 1928, as compared with 11,613 in 1927, shows an increase of 1.98.

*Crude Death-rates.*

Year.	Crude Death-rate per 1,000 Mean Population.	Year.	Crude Death-rate per 1,000 Mean Population.
1901	9.81	1924	8.29
1911	9.39	1925	8.29
1921	8.73	1926	8.74
1922	8.77	1927	8.45
1923	9.03	1928	8.49