

1931.  
NEW ZEALAND.

# MENTAL HOSPITALS OF THE DOMINION

(REPORT ON) FOR 1930.

*Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly pursuant to Section 78 of the Mental Defectives Act, 1911.*

The DIRECTOR-GENERAL to the Hon. A. J. STALLWORTHY, Minister in Charge of the Department of Mental Hospitals.

SIR,—

Wellington, 1st July, 1931.

I have the honour to present the annual report upon the work of the Department of Mental Hospitals for the year ending 31st December, 1930.

At the end of the year 6,293 persons were actually resident in the Government mental hospitals, of whom 5,979 were the subject of a Magistrate's reception order, and 314 were voluntary boarders who had entered the institutions upon their own application.

In addition to those actually in residence, 359 patients were out on probation in the care of friends and relatives at the end of the year.

Our admissions during the period under review totalled 1,407 persons—1,095 by committal and 312 by voluntary application.

We were able to discharge 591 persons during the year, of whom 382 had been committed and 209 were voluntary boarders, the discharge-rate of the two classes being 29.9 per cent. and 66.6 per cent. respectively.

"Recovery" from a mental illness cannot always be strictly interpreted as merely the abeyance of the symptoms which necessitated admission, but rather as the fitness of the patient for reabsorption into ordinary civil life, with its occupations, its pleasures, its temptations, and its disharmonies or stresses. The period of rehabilitation often presents great difficulties to our patients, whose initial mental constitution is in many cases below par, and, although we aim at and have the gratification of seeing many "recoveries" in the true sense of the term, in not a few cases the most we can hope for is a harmonious adjustment between the individual and his environment on discharge.

It is always necessary to ensure that the recreative work of weeks or months is not undone by adverse conditions met with immediately on discharge, and detention is therefore sometimes longer than it would be under more favourable circumstances. Taking into account the present depression, with widespread unemployment, the discharge-rate must be considered as highly satisfactory.

## FACILITIES FOR ADMISSION.

The alternative method of committal provided under section 8 of the Mental Defectives Amendment Act, 1928, was used in 217 cases, or 19.8 per cent. of the total admissions, as compared with 16.4 per cent. last year.

Under this section the necessity for patients having to be taken to the Magistrates' Courts for committal is avoided. The medical examinations of the persons concerned are carried out in the privacy of the home and the legal formalities completed at the hospital. That there is a desire on the part of those affected to avoid unnecessary formality or association with the Courts is reflected in the fact that during the year over 37 per cent. of all our admissions were effected either under section 8 or by voluntary request.

## SHORTAGE OF ACCOMMODATION.

During the year 1,407 persons were admitted to our hospitals, and in spite of discharges, deaths, and releases on probation our population on 31st December was 336 in excess of that on the corresponding date of the previous year.

To meet the increase new additional accommodation was made available for about 300 patients, and at the end of the year we had 748 patients in excess of proper accommodation.