

FIRST REPORT

OF THE

PROVINCIAL SANITARY INSPECTOR.

*To the Honourable the Provincial Secretary,
Victoria, B.C.*

SIR,—I have the honour to submit the first Annual Report on the Provincial Sanitary Inspector's office, being for the six months ending 31st December, 1911.

In assuming my duties as Provincial Sanitary Inspector, the first consideration was the organization of my office and preparation of rules and other matter relating to the sanitation of camps.

In addition to the regular routine work of this office, I have, under your direction, made four trips to the following places upon official duty:—

1. Blubber Bay, Texada Island, investigating a case of small-pox.
2. Investigation of the buildings and sanitary conditions at the farm colony at Coquitlam.
3. Inspection of railroad-construction camps in the vicinity of Savona, and investigating a reported outbreak of typhoid.
4. Inspection of mining, logging, and other camps in the Crow's Nest, Kootenay, Boundary, and Okanagan districts. During this latter trip the weather was so bad that it was not possible for me to extend my investigation to far-outlying camps.

Judging from my limited experience during the past few months, it appears that the sanitary conditions in railroad, logging, mining, and other camps throughout the Province are not, upon the whole, satisfactory. I have found a number of cases where proper attention has not been paid to ventilation, disposal of garbage, etc., although in every case the person responsible for the camp has at once rectified the matter on my suggestion. In this connection, I should like to state that in every instance I have met with nothing but kindness and courtesy from those responsible for the operation of the various camps.

The rules which have been made relative to the sanitation of camps have been printed and distributed among the camps throughout the Province, and advertised in newspapers throughout the Province. A form containing questions relative to the conditions existing in individual camps has also been distributed. Copies of both these papers are annexed hereto.

From the reports received from the outside camps, as well as my personal experience, I find that, with very few exceptions, the water-supply is first-rate, the water being plentiful and good. In a number of what may be called permanent camps there have usually been erected a number of cottages which have been built and are occupied by the men themselves. These buildings are usually well built, complete, and fairly sanitary.

Except in a few cases, the stables have been located with due regard to sanitary conditions.

The usual method of disposing of refuse and garbage is by burial, but in several instances the garbage is burnt, while in a number of cases hogs are kept and fed upon the refuse from the kitchen. The latrines are usually of the open-earth type, but in a number of instances I have found the arrangements in this connection far from sanitary. In some instances closets have been built over running water, but this practice has been stopped wherever I have heard of it.

The question of the ventilation of bunk-houses is a somewhat difficult one. The usual method is by leaving a space in the roof or gables, but during wet and stormy weather the ventilation of the smaller bunk-houses presents a serious problem. Clothes are frequently dried in the same room as that in which the men sleep, and unless the windows and doors are kept open, which is impossible in bad weather, the atmosphere becomes very close.

This Department proposes to enforce the rules and regulations referred to above in every respect. While it is not intended to bring about any necessary changes in such a manner that hardship will be entailed, yet the Department believes that the health of the men is the first consideration. I propose to make it clearly understood that no wanton breach of the departmental rules and regulations will be permitted.

Contractors are, generally speaking, far too careless about the treatment of an injured man. The Department does not believe that there is any reason why an injured man should be kept for hours without medical attendance. The larger contractors are perfectly able to pay for the services of physicians, and there seems to be considerable laxity in this regard. It is clearly impossible for one medical man to properly attend to the men in half a dozen camps situated several miles apart.

I have now under consideration the question of formulating a regulation which will make it compulsory for all camps to keep on hand a complete first-aid equipment, with simple directions for its use.

A considerable number of inquiries have reached me in connection with this newly formed Department, and in addition to this there has been a considerable amount of general correspondence.

Now that this branch of the Service has been organized, it will, I hope, be possible in the future to maintain a better supervision over camps and to ameliorate the conditions under which a large and important body of workers live.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,

L. T. DAVIS, M.D.

Victoria, B.C., 3rd January, 1912.

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