

1944
NEW ZEALAND

PRISONS

(REPORT ON) FOR THE YEAR 1943-44

ALSO

OPERATIONS OF THE OFFENDERS PROBATION ACT

(REPORT ON) FOR THE YEAR 1943-44

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency

The Hon. the MINISTER OF JUSTICE TO HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL.

Wellington, 25th July, 1944.

I HAVE the honour to submit to Your Excellency the report of the Controller-General on the prisons and Borstal institutions of the Dominion for the year 1943-44.

I have, &c.,

H. G. R. MASON,

Minister of Justice.

The CONTROLLER-GENERAL OF PRISONS to the Hon. the MINISTER OF JUSTICE

I have the honour to present the annual report of the Prisons Department for the financial year ended 31st March, 1944, showing also the criminal statistics for the calendar year ending 31st December, 1943. The report, on account of the present necessity for economy of paper, is substantially abridged. There are fourteen penal establishments in the Dominion and it is usual to append the report of each Controlling Officer. Since the outbreak of war these have been omitted, but as these reports give an illuminating word picture of the methods and activities of the Department in dealing with the various classes of offenders I have felt constrained to select three representative reports—viz., that of the Superintendent of the Mount Eden Prison, that of the Superintendent of the Paparua Reformatory Prison, and that of the Superintendent of the Invercargill Borstal. These reports are annexed hereto. The reports that are omitted are hardly less interesting than those published, and several touch on features unique to the institution to which they relate. For example, the Superintendent at New Plymouth refers to the fact that the inmates, by giving public concerts, raised over £500 last year for patriotic purposes. Reference is also made by him to the careful medical and psychological attention given to all inmates by the Medical Officer. The Superintendent of the Point Halswell Borstal makes reference to special difficulties arising from war conditions, and others to their efforts to increase production.

Dealing with the work of the Department generally, despite the serious shortage of staff and the shortage of certain materials essential to the works of the Department, the standard of efficiency has been well maintained. In the matter of foodstuffs the Department is largely self-sustained, but stocks of certain equipment and clothing are low and it has only been by the exercise of the greatest care and close attention to repairs that it has been possible to satisfy requirements. The replacement position has now eased slightly and it is hoped that certain outstanding orders, particularly sheeting and clothing materials, will shortly be supplied. The increased industrial activity designed to assist the war effort has been maintained, the credits again constituting a record, the amount paid to Public Account, £99,950, exceeding the previous year by £620.

In the achievement of this result the staff and most of the prisoners have enthusiastically co-operated, both on the farms and in the shops. With few exceptions the conduct of prisoners has been good, the refractory ones being confined mainly to military defaulters, a few of whom seem unable to reconcile their illusory philosophies with reality, and in consequence, despite their sincerity in some instances, are a great nuisance potential as a focus of dissension and mischief. It is of interest to note that a number who claim to base their objection to military service on conscientious grounds have no scruples in the matter of deception and trickery designed to circumvent the Prisons Regulations, some not even hesitating to have recourse to the theft of produce and trafficking.