

STATISTICS

The number of distinct persons received into penal establishments during 1943 totalled 3,656, which number is less by 563 than the total received during 1942. There were approximately 600 fewer males committed to prison during 1943 than during the previous year. The number of women committed to prison (293) represents an increase of 30 on the figures for the previous year. This increase, as was the case last year, was mainly due to the greater incidence of prostitution associated with the influx to our cities of armed personnel and to the efforts of the authorities to control the spread of venereal disease. It is satisfactory to note that since these statistics were compiled there has been a noticeable falling off in the number of committals.

The ratio of distinct persons to the general population for 1943 was 15·17 per 10,000, as compared with 18·46 for 1942. In making comparisons due allowance must be made for the fact that the general population has fluctuated in consequence of the movement of men overseas, but it is satisfactory to observe that the general downward trend is maintained (1890, 38·61; 1910, 32·43; 1914, 31·05; 1932, 22·9; 1935, 13·76; 1939, 15·38; 1943, 15·17).

The daily average in custody for the year 1943 was 1,099, representing an increase of 70 on the average for the previous year. The fact that a number of military defaulters are serving indeterminate sentences tends to keep the daily average static rather than for it to fall, as it normally would, in ratio to the decline in the aggregate number of persons received. The length of sentence also has a direct bearing on the daily average in custody, and, as the following table reveals, there has been a substantial drop in the number of persons sentenced for terms of less than three months, as well as an increase in the number sentenced to terms exceeding one year, both factors tending to raise the daily average.

LENGTH OF SENTENCES

Term of Sentence.	Number of Prisoners.				
	1939.	1940.	1941.	1942.	1943.
Under one month	964	774	638	552	430
One month and under three months	642	527	739	1,283	824
Three months and under six months	286	260	356	398	421
Six months and under twelve months	194	210	181	206	241
One year and under three years	320	362	364	444	475
Three years and under five years	76	57	76	98	60
Five years and over	23	11	15	48	31
Totals	2,505	2,201	2,369	3,029	2,482

NATURE OF OFFENCES

A comparison of the nature of offences as classified under three main groupings in the table hereunder is interesting as revealing a decline in the number of "offences against the person" and in the number of "miscellaneous offences." Under this latter heading were included in the totals for 1942 a considerable number of persons involved in industrial disputes. There were no imprisonments under this heading during 1943. The most arresting feature of the table is the steadily mounting total of "offences against property." When it is borne in mind that the facilities for honest employment were abundant and that wages were good, it is only possible to ascribe the increase in the number of offences of a predatory nature to a growing declension in moral standards. The simple copybook dictum "honesty is the best policy" would seem almost to be an out-moded philosophy not compatible with the acquisitive astuteness of those who comprise this group, many of whom strive to rationalize their predacious acts by self-deluding sophistries that the criminal law is simply an instrument designed to buttress the rights of property. Such anarchistic casuistry strikes at the very foundation of the rule of law and would undermine the basis of mutual relations upon which society exists. Our criminal law is certainly designed to buttress the rights of man, but it is founded on the principle that the restraint of liberty is justified only in so far as it is necessary to maintain liberty.

Year.	Offences against the Person.	Offences against Property.	Miscellaneous Offences.	Total.
1943	239	1,060	1,183	2,482
1942	309	969	1,751	3,029
1941	249	781	1,339	2,369
1940	238	789	1,174	2,201
1939	238	777	1,490	2,505
1938	197	740	1,287	2,224
1937	191	675	1,125	1,991
1936	189	599	1,002	1,790