

The late Lord Hewart stated: "Imprisonment is the last resort, necessary, of course, for cases that really call for serious punishment, and in these cases a substantial term might do some good. A short sentence hardly ever does any good."

The experience of a short sentence usually merely serves to accustom a man to prison conditions and diminishes what should be a wholesome dread of penal institutions. Approximately 30 per cent. of the total receptions are what may be called petty recidivists who have been in and out of prison several times, many of whom have qualified to be declared habitual offenders. Short sentences do not deter these, as time is an essential element in habit formation and in giving effect to a course of training which might assist in rehabilitation on release. Time also is a factor from a deterrent point of view, for the reason that under the present ameliorated prison conditions the loss of liberty is virtually the only punitive factor in imprisonment. Unless the offence is such as to really call for a salutary penalty, it is often better to have recourse to some alternative to imprisonment, such as probation.

Term of Sentence.	Number of Prisoners.						
	1939.	1940.	1941.	1942.	1943.	1944.	1945.
Under one month	964	774	638	552	430	367	364
One month and under three months ..	642	527	739	1,283	824	627	639
Three months and under six months ..	286	260	356	398	421	327	318
Six months and under twelve months ..	194	210	181	206	241	189	187
One year and under three years ..	320	362	364	444	475	456	449
Three years and under five years ..	76	57	76	98	60	78	64
Five years and over	23	11	15	48	31	31	18
Indefinite (including "defaulters") ..	..	..	..	..	..	24	26
Totals	2,505	2,201	2,369	3,029	2,482	2,099	2,065

NATIONALITY OF OFFENDERS

The following table shows the receptions classified on a nationality basis. I have shown the figures for the past ten years because they indicate the marked upward movement until recently in the number of Maoris committed to prison. The number of Maoris sentenced to imprisonment last year was 123 less than during the previous year; nonetheless, on a population basis, the proportion of Maoris committed to prison still substantially exceeds those of European stock, and unhappily the number of serious crimes of a sexual nature by Maoris has increased.

The number of New-Zealand-born prisoners (excluding Maoris) was almost the same as for the previous year.

Year.	New-Zealand-born (excluding Maoris).	Maoris.	British and Foreign.	Total.
1945	1,109	430	526	2,065
1944	1,105	553	441	2,099
1943	1,401	523	558	2,482
1942	1,880	450	699	3,029
1941	1,402	346	621	2,369
1940	1,257	330	614	2,201
1939	1,427	310	768	2,505
1938	1,248	252	724	2,224
1937	1,383	257	351	1,991
1936	1,022	199	569	1,790