

At the Borstals a few years ago the Department appointed Housemasters who were charged with the responsibility of integrating the training-work of the institution and developing socialising influences. Consideration has been given to the possibility of extending this phase of reclamation work to the larger prisons, and during the year a Welfare Officer was appointed to Mount Eden Prison who will have personal, but non-disciplinary, contact with every prisoner with a view to helping him in his problems, and who will be responsible for co-ordinating the work of all concerned with the prisoner's rehabilitation.

The general scheme of classification is based on sex, age, criminal experience, and propensities. In the first instance prisoners are placed under observation for a short period at a central prison, and are subsequently assigned to institutions suited to their needs and personality and where they are considered likely to react most satisfactorily. The more dangerous and intractable prisoners in respect of whom security considerations are important are detained at Mount Eden Prison; the more amenable and in respect of whom there are reasonable hopes of reformation are transferred to the farms and camps; the younger offenders are sent to Borstal institutions; prisoners showing inclination to sex perversion are segregated at New Plymouth, where the Medical Officer is a psychiatrist who gives special attention to helping inmates to resolve their behaviour problems; and the older and infirm prisoners are kept at Wanganui. Wellington Prison is mainly a trial and remand prison, and Wi Tako is a small prison farm to take the overflow of short-sentence prisoners from Wellington and other nearby police gaols.

At the camps and prison farms the "open system" is in vogue and the prisoners, except at night, are to a large extent placed on their honour.

All the younger offenders are subjected to examination by a psychiatrist, as also are all prisoners manifesting abnormal characteristics from a mental point of view.

STATISTICS

Receptions.—The prison population was slightly lower during 1948 than during the previous year. The daily average number in custody was 1,109. The number of distinct persons received into prison during 1948 was 2,181, made up of 2,124 males and 57 females, as compared with the total of 2,351 during 1947.

A table showing the number of receptions and discharges at each institution is appended as an annexure to this report, but for convenience of comparison the following summary shows the totals for each of the past five years:

	1944.	1945.	1946.	1947.	1948.
Number in custody at beginning of year ..	1,077	993	1,040	1,032	1,137
Number received during year ..	4,089	3,996	4,368	4,610	4,274
Number discharged or transferred ..	4,173	3,949	4,376	4,505	4,386
Number in prison at end of year ..	993	1,040	1,032	1,137	1,025

It will be noted from the table that the number of receptions during 1948 was 336 less than the figure for the previous year. Included amongst the receptions were 427 ship-deserters, which number accounts for approximately 10 per cent. of the total number of persons committed to prison.

Notwithstanding this external influence, the general trend of prison population in New Zealand continues downwards. It is of interest to note the ratio of prisoners to each 10,000 of the general population over the years: 1890, 38.61; 1914 (pre World War I), 31.05; 1935, 13.76; 1939 (pre World War II), 15.38; 1943, 15.17; 1947, 13.04; 1948, 11.84.