

1910.
NEW ZEALAND.

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, PRISONS BRANCH

(REPORT ON), FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER, 1909;

ALSO

OPERATION OF THE FIRST OFFENDERS' PROBATION ACT, 1908

(REPORT ON), FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER, 1909.

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

The UNDER-SECRETARY to the Hon. the MINISTER OF JUSTICE.

SIR,—

Department of Justice, Wellington, 28th June, 1910.

I have the honour to submit to you the report of the Inspector of Prisons for the year ended the 31st March last, together with the annual prison statistics.

There was a slight increase in the number of prisoners received during the year, but not more than might be expected from the natural increase of population. The number of prisoners received who had been previously convicted shows that it is necessary to pay more attention to the reformatory side of our prison system.

Extracts from the annual reports of the Gaolers are attached hereto.

At Auckland the principal works have been the quarrying of road-metal and the quarrying and dressing of stone for the new wing now in course of construction. The new wing is progressing as quickly as circumstances will permit, but I should be glad to see a more rapid rate of progress, in order to relieve the congestion that arises occasionally. It will be a great relief to all concerned when the old wooden wing can be vacated. Some thirty-odd prisoners are engaged on the defence works at Fort Cautley.

I think it will be necessary to erect a separate building for women prisoners, so that the whole of the gaol may be utilised for the men.

At Wellington the bulk of the prisoners are engaged in brickmaking at Mount Cook, and on the defence works at Point Halswell. They have also carried out a number of improvements in the gaol, and to the residences attached thereto.

At Lyttelton we find an increasing difficulty in providing suitable work. The prisoners are engaged in work for the Borough Council, at the Artillery Barracks, and in the tailoring and bootmaking shops. In the shops, clothes and boots for the various prisons are turned out. I am of opinion that before long we shall have to consider the question of utilising prison labour at Lyttelton in a more useful and lucrative manner, regard always being had to the necessity of avoiding competition with free labour.

At Dunedin we are faced with the same difficulty, as the only work for the prisoners is that at the fort at Taiaaroa Heads.

Invercargill promises to be one of our most useful gaols. The new building, which was erected almost wholly by prison labour, was opened in February last, and is well adapted for classification purposes. It has been planned so that additions may easily be made as required. The market-garden continues to be worked profitably. A concrete-block making plant has been recently purchased, and a ready sale is found for the concrete blocks produced. An arrangement has been made with the Borough Council for the reclamation by prison labour of over 2,000 acres of the Waihopai Estuary. This work, which I hope will be commenced shortly, will provide useful and profitable labour for the prisoners, and should also be of great benefit to the Borough of Invercargill.

A number of boys have been sent to Invercargill, and arrangements have been made for advancing their education. There are some interesting remarks on this subject in the report of the Gaoler attached hereto.

At New Plymouth the prisoners are principally engaged in quarrying road-metal, which is sold to the Borough Council. A few older men work in the garden, which produces an abundant supply of vegetables for the use of the prison.

The habitual criminals detained in the Reformatory Prison were employed at matmaking for some time; but, as the supply of mats exceeded the demand, these men have been put to work in the quarry in a gang by themselves.