

INVERCARGILL PRISON.

SIR,—

H.M. Prison, Invercargill, 20th May, 1911.

I have the honour to report on the working of this prison for the year ended 31st December, 1910.

In custody on 1st January, 1910, 36 males and no females; received during the year, 111 males and 1 female; making a total of 147 males and 1 female dealt with during the year. Discharged during the year, 82 males and 1 female, leaving in confinement at the end of the year 65 males.

The conduct of the officers has been good, only one officer having been reported for simple neglect of duty, and fined 5s.

Two male lunatics were received during the year, also 5 males suffering from the effects of drink. The usual course adopted is to send them direct to the Hospital, but occasionally a lunatic or D.T. case is committed to the prison direct from the country. In such cases, owing to the very satisfactory arrangements made here for dealing with such unfortunates, they are usually removed direct to the public Hospital on the Gaol Surgeon's recommendation and by Visiting Justice's warrant. This humane method of dealing with such cases continues to work most satisfactorily. The local hospital authorities are deserving of the greatest commendation in this respect, for it is only by their hearty co-operation that this course is possible.

The quality of the rations supplied has been good, consequently there has been no complaint. In this respect I consider that a more varied diet would be beneficial. The present ration scale does not provide for this.

The conduct of the prisoners has, with a few exceptions, been good. Twelve prisoners were punished for minor breaches of the Prison Regulations, the punishment usually taking the form of forfeiture of marks.

There were two escapes during the year. On each occasion two youths made their escape by bolting from the prison-grounds. The first two were speedily recaptured by the prison officers, and the second two by the police assisted by civilians. In the first two cases a sentence of six months' additional imprisonment was ordered, and in the second twelve months.

The new prison was opened in February of the present year by the Right Hon. Sir Joseph Ward. I am pleased to state that the occupation of the new building marks a distinct advance in prison-administration, the single-cell system and the convenience for carrying out a more complete scheme of classification being the most important. Much remains yet to be done, but when the contemplated additions are completed it will be possible to introduce the new scheme of reformatory treatment, and with every prospect of success; but in order to obtain the best results the erection of the new additions will require to be pushed on steadily and continuously.

The various works in connection with the new prison are now in full swing. The new church, schoolroom, workshop, and dynamo-house are well advanced. The use of concrete blocks as a building-material enables us to put up a building in less than half the time required by the old process of using solid concrete. The Gaoler's residence has been bodily removed from the old to the new gaol site, and is now being fitted up as a married officer's residence.

The concrete-block-making industry has turned out a complete success, and has justified the stand you took in this matter. Besides turning out all the blocks required for our own buildings, a very considerable revenue is being derived from supplying the outside demand, which is considerable; and as we are the only manufacturers we do not interfere with outsiders. We are at present turning out up to 300 per day, which just about meets present requirements. The demand is still increasing, and will continue to do so.

The market-garden industry still prospers. I regret my inability (owing to the large number of other works on hand) to give this branch of industry the time and attention it deserves; nevertheless the sum of £248 14s. 4d. was received for vegetables sold and paid for during the year, and the amount outstanding would have brought the total to well over £300. Market-gardening affords a remunerative means of employment for prisoners not physically capable of performing heavy work, a class which is usually difficult to find employment for.

Satisfactory arrangements have been completed with the Invercargill Borough Council for the reclamation of 2,420 acres of the Waihopai Estuary. A start was made with the work in September last. The first work put in hand was the extension of the existing tramway for a distance of over half a mile through the bush, and the erection of the necessary buildings—cookhouse, messroom, workshops, shelter-sheds, &c. These works were completed and the first train of trucks taken over the extension within seven weeks, the whole of the work being done by the prisoners. At the present time an average of 30 prisoners are employed on this work. The plant consists of 1 locomotive, 20 earth-wagons of 3 yards capacity each, 1 tram-car, 1 steam Priestman dredge and 2 pontoons, 3 pile-drivers, 1 barge, and 1 motor-launch. The amount of spoil railed out daily amounts to about 250 cubic yards. Over 2,000 piles from 16 ft. to 40 ft. in length have also been cut and conveyed to the works. The work is progressing rapidly, and to the entire satisfaction of both the Public Works Department and the Borough Council. The whole work will take about five years to complete, and is only the beginning of a much larger scheme of reclamation.

I am pleased to state that the system introduced last year by way of experiment of transferring youths to this prison and providing special facilities for their improvement educationally still continues, and has been attended by markedly good results, the average number attending school being 30. The usual standards are observed, and every youth under twenty-five must attend until he can pass the Fourth Standard. After having done so attendance at school is optional, but every youth who has passed is encouraged to take up some special line of study. Quite a number avail themselves of the opportunity and they are placed in an advanced class. The subjects taken up are chemistry, shorthand, electrical engineering, music, physiology, and at least one is studying for his B.A. degree. Some are