

CONDITION AND SUITABILITY OF PRISON BUILDINGS.

Auckland.—The Mount Eden Prison, although built from plans that were prepared many years ago, still ranks as our leading penal prison. It is not built altogether in accordance with modern requirements, but it is secure and sanitary, and the general "lay out" of the structure is on sufficiently satisfactory lines. Unfortunately, there is no provision in the original design for adequate storage facilities, infirmary, and Medical Officer's room. There is an omission, too, that probably was not considered of any importance in the earlier days of prison-construction, but one that must be supplied at the present time when the reasonable comfort of the staffs of large public or private establishments is provided for as a matter of course, and that is the provision of dining and recreation rooms for the warders, not only at Mount Eden but in all our new prisons or in prisons where extensions are being made. A large room or hall is also required for educational instruction. To provide this additional accommodation it is proposed, if architectural exigencies permit, to alter the internal arrangements of the final wing of the building that is about to be erected, and by cutting out some of the cells in the original design to make room for the various utilities referred to. A number of cells and rooms in the main building that are now used, but serve very indifferently, for stores, officers' dining-room, kitchen, &c., will be made available for their original purpose when the new wing is completed. Another omission in connection with the construction of this prison was the failure to provide a hot-water supply, there being no hot water available even for bathing prisoners on reception. This is now being remedied, the Public Works Department having received instructions to instal a hot-water system forthwith.

New Plymouth.—This prison is in fair repair, and, with a few alterations and possibly some extension, can be made to serve its purpose as an "habitual criminals' prison" for some years to come.

Napier.—As has been pointed out in previous reports, this prison is hopelessly obsolete, and we can only reiterate the recommendations that have been made from time to time that the present site, which is one of the most valuable residential sites in Napier, should be sold and a part of the proceeds used to purchase an area for a smaller prison in a less prominent locality.

Wellington.—With the exception of the new brick wing the same may be said of the Terrace as of the Napier Prison buildings. The recent escapes have emphasized the unfitness of the structure and of the exercise-yards surrounding it for their present purpose, but without considerable expenditure it will be exceedingly difficult to make any improvement. At the present time the building and its surroundings, combined with the brickmaking-works at Mount Cook, are a constant source of anxiety to the officers of the prison and to the administration, and, to put the position plainly, the time has arrived when the Terrace Prison should be definitely "ended or mended." That is to say, the whole of the wooden structure should be pulled down and re-erected in brick on modern lines, or a smaller prison should be built on some suitable site in Wellington or its suburbs. The present area could be sold for residential purposes, and the proceeds of the sale used to defray the cost of erecting the new prison. The configuration of the present site does not lend itself to the laying-out of suitable exercise-yards, and this, in conjunction with the steep approaches, makes it desirable that another site should be selected if a building programme be decided upon.

Lyttelton.—With regard to this prison, the remarks made in the last annual report can only be repeated. Not only does the general design and lack of yard accommodation render any attempt at complete classification impossible, but the absence of sufficient suitable and remunerative employment makes the continuous location of a prison at Lyttelton a most expensive and unsatisfactory proposition. The utilization of the wing vacated by the female prisoners, on their transfer to Addington, for male prisoners undergoing reformatory detention, and for first offenders and those awaiting trial, will improve the position to a small extent, but it is merely a palliative and does not remove the necessity for acquiring a suitable site elsewhere upon the first favourable opportunity.

Dunedin.—Unlike the buildings at Wellington and Napier, the Prison at Dunedin is in thoroughly good repair, having been built in brick within comparatively recent years, but on an unsatisfactory site. There is no provision for employment except for a very limited number of prisoners, and in any case, the number of cells is far in excess of the requirements of the district, there being fifty-two cells on the male side and twenty on the female side to accommodate a daily average of 23·53 male and 1·28 female prisoners. The site is a valuable one, and, as recommended in the case of Napier and Wellington, the property should be disposed of and a much smaller prison erected in a more suitable locality.

Invercargill.—This is the most recently erected prison in the Dominion, and the building is being extended as our requirements demand. A new wing of two stories, comprising a hospital ward and accessories, warders' quarters, and a number of additional cells has just been finished, and a further extension is being taken in hand. Exercise-yards and other enclosures yet require to be completed, but as all the available labour is at present being concentrated on the Waihopai Estuary reclamation-works these matters must stand over. The whole of the buildings are in first-class order, and are well suited for the purpose for which they were erected.

Gisborne.—The Gaol at Gisborne is quite a modern structure, having been completed and occupied in 1911 only. It comprises Gaoler's quarters, nine male and three female cells, with the necessary day-rooms, bathrooms, and other conveniences, with internal exercise-yards covered over with expanded metal. While the Gaol buildings are convenient in every respect the property is at present enclosed merely by a post-and-wire fence, and, as the Town of Gisborne is extending in this direction and settle