

PROGRESS DURING THE YEAR.

Buildings, &c.

In my capacity as Supervisor of Prison Works I have frequently visited the various places at which works of every description are being carried out, and although the staffing difficulty has here again interfered with efficiency, yet generally speaking fair progress has been made in connection with the various works in hand. The following is a brief summary of such works and the progress made since last year's report was written :—

Auckland.—Owing to the difficulty of obtaining the necessary materials, and the increased cost thereof, the work of lifting the concrete covering the cell-floors and the relaying of the same in wood has been discontinued for the present. The same remark applies to the proposed extension of the electric-wiring system for cell-lighting purposes. It is hoped, however, that it will now become possible to proceed with both of those necessary works.

The new workshops mentioned in last year's report as being under construction have been completed, and the necessary bootmaking machinery installed. An electric motor for driving the machinery, together with the necessary shafting, belting, &c., has also been placed in position. The whole of the bootmaking and clothing-repair staffs have been moved into this building, and owing to the added facilities and increased accommodation provided it will now be possible to employ an increased number of prisoners in both directions. On the first floor of this building an area of 2,000 square feet of floor-space is still available, and this area can be used for the purpose of establishing additional industries now in contemplation. Four additional yards, each furnished with up-to-date sanitary appliances and conveniences, have been provided, thus enabling a proper system of classification for the workshop employees to be brought into operation.

As further residences for Prison officers have become an urgent necessity a start has been made in the direction of clearing a space at the back of the Mount Eden Prison Reserve for the locating of three additional residences. The houses to be erected are intended for the Chief and Principal Warders, and will therefore be above the standard usually provided.

Waikeria.—The administrative wing at Waikeria has now been completed and the premises occupied. An additional officer's residence has also been built and occupied. A concrete reservoir holding 29,000 gallons of water has been constructed, and an up-to-date septic tank is now well under way. A temporary camp has been established in the vicinity of the dairy buildings, with kitchen, bathrooms, &c., complete. Arrangements are also being made in the direction of providing quarters for the single officers, and it is hoped to make a start with the putting-in of the foundations within the next week or two.

Wellington.—Necessary alterations at Point Halswell are being put in hand to enable the buildings there to be utilized for the accommodation of the female prisoners now housed in the old Terrace Prison, which is rapidly becoming unfit for human habitation. The Point Halswell site has proved itself to be one of the most healthy in the Dominion; and the transfer of the women prisoners to their new location will undoubtedly improve existing conditions, and enable the Department to carry out a much-needed scheme of classification that will be beneficial alike to the prisoners and the State.

Wi Tako.—Work is being rapidly pushed on in connection with the erection of the necessary buildings at Trentham to enable a class of short-sentenced and well-conducted prisoners to be employed on the drainage and other improvements that are in contemplation.

Paparaui Prison.—The building of No. 1 cell range of the permanent concrete structure has been practically completed and the cells on the ground floor occupied. The erection of the kitchen block is also well in hand. This building has been roofed in, and the finishing of the interior is at present being pushed on. Two additional cell houses, each capable of providing accommodation for thirty prisoners, referred to in last year's report, have also been finished, and are now fully occupied. Two officers' cottages have been completed and occupied, while a Gaoler's residence and another officer's cottage are well under way.

Invercargill Borstal Institution.—The building of the necessary enclosing-walls has been completed, and the work of subdividing the area so enclosed is being proceeded with. The provision of a range of buildings comprising an up-to-date kitchen, workshops, baths, &c., has been commenced. A special division capable of accommodating the inmates, also a modern dairy and buildings, have been erected on the institution farm area, while a cottage for the use of the farm-manager is now being erected. Other necessary buildings are in contemplation, and now that the main building is completed it should be possible to make more rapid progress with the interclassification that was initiated last year.

The whole of the works referred to are being carried out by institutional labour under the direction of our officers. When this fact is taken into consideration it should tend to dispel the somewhat prevalent opinion that the labour of prisoners is of very little value and not worth taking into account. The fact that the Prisons Department at the present time is able to undertake and successfully carry out the work of erecting buildings, both large and small, to the entire satisfaction of the Public Works Engineers, who periodically make an inspection of all works so carried out, is, I submit, a matter upon which the Department has a right to congratulate itself. The consequent saving to the public exchequer should not be lost sight of, while the effect upon the inmates themselves, taking into consideration the experience which they are enabled to obtain, has been found to be of great benefit in enabling many of them to rehabilitate themselves on their release.