

1920.
NEW ZEALAND.

PRISONS

(REPORT ON) FOR THE YEAR 1919-20.

ALSO

OPERATIONS OF THE FIRST OFFENDERS' PROBATION ACT, 1908

(REPORT ON) FOR THE YEAR 1919-20.

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

The Hon. the MINISTER IN CHARGE OF THE PRISONS DEPARTMENT to His Excellency the GOVERNOR-GENERAL.

MY LORD,—

Wellington, 31st July, 1920.

I have the honour to submit to Your Excellency the report of the Prisons Department for the year 1919.

I have, &c.,

J. G. COATES,

Minister in Charge of Prisons Department.

The CONTROLLER-GENERAL OF PRISONS to the MINISTER IN CHARGE OF PRISONS DEPARTMENT.

SIR,—

Prisons Department, 15th July, 1920.

I have the honour to present the thirty-ninth annual report of the Prisons Department, together with the criminal statistics for the year ended 31st December, 1919, and the figures and reports regarding the administration of the First Offenders' Probation Act, 1908.

PRISON POPULATION.

Comparative Figures.

The criminal statistics show that the number of new prisoners received into the prisons and reformatories of the Dominion during the last calendar year was 3,207, compared with 3,150 in 1918 and 4,112 in 1917, while the daily average for the three years respectively was—in 1919, 1004·34; in 1918, 981·95; and in 1917, 914·26. When considering, however, the actual position with regard to the increase or decrease in the criminal population of the Dominion account must be taken of the number of prisoners in the different institutions who were sent there for military and not for civil offences. The departmental records show that in 1919 the daily average number of military court-martialled prisoners was 192·80; in 1918, 222·928; and in 1917, 54·111. If these figures are deducted from the totals for the three years under review we find that the total daily average of civil prisoners was 811·54 in 1919, compared with 759·02 in 1918 and 860·14 in 1917. Thus while there was a decrease of 101 between 1917 and 1918, an actual increase of 52 took place in 1919 compared with the previous year. In 1913, the last complete period before the outbreak of war, the daily average number of prisoners was 893·24, so that there is a clear reduction of 81·70 in the prison criminal population for the first year after the war, in comparison with the last pre-war year. This is eminently satisfactory in view of the often-expressed opinion that the coming of peace would be signalized by a marked increase of crime in all countries engaged in war activities. The reason for this somewhat unexpected position is probably that up to the present time we are still floating upon a wave of apparent prosperity. Employment is plentiful, wages are high, and there is little poverty. If conditions change for the worse, it is possible that the change will be reflected in our criminal statistics.