

methods followed (the use of the old-fashioned hammer and drill instead of the much more effective pneumatic drill, and the lack of a modern crushing-plant) the output of crushed metal has been absurdly limited, and out of all proportion to the number of men employed in the quarry. Your visit to the Auckland Prison a few months ago enabled you to appreciate the disadvantages under which we were labouring, and your subsequent approval of the expenditure requisite to enable the Department to purchase a compressor, motor, and drills will enable us very shortly to more than quadruple our output. If your further proposal to establish a completely equipped crushing-plant is finally given effect to, we shall be in a position to provide the Auckland local bodies with much-needed supplies of metal and at the same time to show a handsome return upon our expenditure. At present we are quite unable to cope with the orders we receive. The placing of the Mount Eden metal-crushing works on a commercial basis will also assist us materially in financing the payment of wages to prisoners with dependants.

The provision of brick-burning works at Trentham is another strictly commercial proposition that should assist us in financing our added obligations. The supply of clay at Trentham is good in quality and illimitable in quantity, while the demand for bricks for governmental and other purposes cannot be satisfied. We have recently let a contract for the building of a Sercombe patent kiln and chimney-stack, and are now transferring an engine and brickmaking plant to Trentham to enable us to make the bricks that will be required in the first instance to build this structure. An opencast kiln will be required for this purpose. The bricks for this kiln will be obtained from our Mount Cook works, which were finally closed down last year.

Closing and Reduction of Prisons.

The acquisition of new sites and the steady advance of our building programme has enabled us to make various changes during the year that will tend to increase our working efficiency and at the same time to improve conditions so far as the individual prisoner is concerned. At the end of December last we were able to find accommodation for the prisoners remaining at Lyttelton in the new buildings at Paparua, Templeton. From that date the Lyttelton Prison, after an existence of something over thirty-five years, was reduced to the status of a police gaol, with a single officer in charge of the small section of the buildings still utilized for the detention of short-sentence local prisoners.

The approaching transfer of the female division at Wellington to Point Halswell, combined with the closing-down of the brickworks at Mount Cook and the opening of the Wi Tako Prison for short-sentence prisoners, will soon reduce the prison population in Wellington itself considerably, and it has accordingly been arranged that the Gaoler at Wellington shall in future be responsible for the Terrace Prison only.

As stated in a previous paragraph, the Kaingaroa Afforestation Camp will be finally abandoned at the end of the present month.

The falling-off in the number of committals to the Napier Prison, together with our policy of transferring all men with sentences exceeding six months to other prisons or institutions, has resulted in the daily average falling considerably during the past twelve months. It has therefore been decided to reduce the prison at Napier to the status of a police gaol, with a Principal Warder and one officer as staff, instead of a Gaoler and four other officers. Were it not for the necessity of retaining a place in which trial and remand prisoners can be safely held, the Napier Prison would be closed absolutely.

Acquisition of Further Farm Areas and Development of Existing Properties.

Our property at Templeton has recently been added to by the purchase of two small farms, both of which were offered to us for sale by the Crown lessees occupying them. We have now acquired in this way five of the sections comprising the Drayton Settlement. Their abandonment by the original lessees has probably been caused by the fact that the sections are too small in area and are not sufficiently productive to enable the settlers to support themselves and their families satisfactorily.

The development of our freehold and leasehold sections at Invercargill has proceeded during the year, and further areas have been grassed. A considerable amount of drainage will now be required before our cultivations can be increased.

The Waikeria Reformatory Farm management have continued to develop the area under their charge, and have also extended our cultivations over land belonging to the Mental Hospitals Department. The two Departments have agreed that the whole of the Mental Hospitals property lying between our boundaries and the Waikeria and Mangatutu Streams shall be improved and cultivated by prison labour, the Prisons Department to retain possession of this land for a period of ten years without charge, as compensation for labour and capital expended. An additional area of not less than 1,000 acres should now be acquired either adjoining the Waikeria property or within easy distance, to enable us to carry on our farming policy economically and effectively.

The provision of a prison reserve of 362 acres at Trentham has eased the position a little, so far as development at Wellington is concerned, but the position will never be satisfactory until a suitable block of country is obtained in the Wellington District and the whole of the prison population moved out of the city.

OPERATIONS OF THE CRIMES AMENDMENT ACT, 1910, AND THE STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 1917.

The report of the Prisons Board for the year gives a full and detailed account of the administration of the Acts bearing upon the release upon probation and discharge of habitual criminals, reformatory-detention offenders, and of hard-labour prisoners whose cases come under their