

jurisdiction. The personnel of the Board and the long experience of its members peculiarly fit it for the semi-judicial work it has been carrying on since it was first constituted in 1911. Judged by results the legislation of 1910 and 1917 has been fully justified, and has paved the way for the proposed enactment of 1920 making the cases of all offenders, whatever their sentences, subject to review by the Board, in regard to the question of release upon probation or final discharge.

DEPARTMENTAL AND STAFF MATTERS.

In my first report after the conclusion of the war I expressed the hope that with the advent of peace our difficulties in regard to the staffing of the different prisons and institutions would cease; but I regret to say that such is far from being the case. With the closing of some of the older prisons and the reduction in grade of others I thought we should be able to keep our staffs up to full strength, and to make many very necessary improvements in our organization. Unfortunately, however, our experience has been quite contrary to my expectations. Not only has it been found impossible to keep our staffs up to full strength and to augment them where required, but there is at present a pronounced shortage of officers in all our large and more important institutions. More serious still is the dearth of suitable applicants for employment in our service. Under former conditions the work of a prison warder was comparatively simple—he was little more than a guard whose chief concern was to see that the prisoners carried out their very elementary tasks, that they did not escape, and that discipline was maintained. The position has now completely changed. While a certain number of guards are still necessary, the majority of our officers are required to have a knowledge of the various trades and callings that are being followed in the different institutions. They are also expected to interest themselves in the work and in the lives of the men under their charge, and to assist where possible in building up character, and generally in fitting the men to become useful citizens on their release. Unfortunately, there is not one applicant in fifty who is qualified by experience or temperament for the role he is called upon to fill. In fact, the average candidate for employment is not even up to the average standard of twenty years ago. In proportion to the total number of officers there is no Department in the Public Service through which so many men pass in the course of the year. Many of them leave within a few days or weeks of reporting for duty; many more are dispensed with for general unfitness; while others, again, transfer to the more highly paid Police Force, or take up more remunerative private employment. The Department is fighting hard to improve conditions in every direction, and, as evidenced by the particulars published in this and previous reports, has met with a fair measure of success, but I am reluctantly compelled to admit that further progress along the road of reform will be difficult, if not impossible, unless we are given the means to attract the right type of man to our service. In the first place the pay must be raised to a rate at least equivalent to that allotted to the sister service, the Police. With increased pay we should be able to build up our staffs to full strength, and so provide for a reduction in hours and for an improvement in the conditions under which our officers work. With the present limited and partly temporary staffs it is quite impossible to have an efficient or contented service. It is probable that the contemplated general increase in salaries may somewhat improve the position, but, taking into account the special nature of the work and the hours of duty, it is apparent that the Prisons Department should be given exceptional treatment if it is successfully to carry to fruition the schemes of reform upon which it has entered.

By the passing of the Prisons Amendment Act, 1919, the title of the Permanent Head of the Department has been changed from "The Inspector of Prisons" to "The Controller-General of Prisons," while certain added powers have been conferred upon him. A section of the same Act provided that the person for the time being holding the office of "Deputy Inspector of Prisons" should become an "Inspector of Prisons." Mr. M. Hawkins thus received well-merited promotion, and has now the necessary powers to enable him to carry on the general work of inspection in addition to his former duties as "Supervisor of Prison Works." While by his long experience and ability Mr. Hawkins is well fitted for the combined positions, there is much ground to be covered in his inspections and many works of considerable importance requiring his personal attention. The volume of work is too great for one man to carry on satisfactorily, and it will soon be necessary to provide assistance for office inspection and the visiting of the smaller institutions.

During the year Mr. A. W. Ironside, Superintendent of the Auckland Prison, and the senior officer in the service, reached the age-limit and retired on superannuation. Mr. Ironside has always been a highly efficient and loyal officer, and his retirement is a distinct loss to the Department. Other officers who have retired on superannuation are Mr. David Kearney, Deputy Superintendent at Auckland, and Mr. R. L. Johnson, Police Gaoler at Wanganui, both of whom served the Department loyally and faithfully over a long period of years.

Consequent upon the reduction in grade of the Wellington Prison the Gaoler, Mr. G. H. T. Crook, has commenced six months' leave of absence prior to final retirement. His place at Wellington is being taken by Mr. J. C. Scanlon, of Napier.

Mr. Ironside's place at Auckland has been filled by the appointment, as Gaoler, of Mr. T. Vincent, of New Plymouth, who has been succeeded by Mr. J. Down, formerly Officer in Charge of the Waikeria Reformatory.

In connection with our general scheme of reform, provision was made some time ago for the appointment of a Superintendent at Waikeria, who had special qualifications for the efficient carrying-on of the institution as a reformatory. Considerable difficulty was experienced in finding a suitable man for the position, but it was finally arranged, with the consent of the Government, that the Mental Hospitals Department should place the services of Dr. St. L. H. Gribben, Medical Superintendent of the Sunnyside Mental Hospital, at our disposal as a temporary