

supervision. The actual weekly sum available as a contribution towards the support of dependants, therefore, amounts to 16s. 6d. for the first month, rising to £1 2s. per week in the third month after a prisoner-labourer commences to receive pay. Under the regulations no payments of any kind can be made until a prisoner has served the first three months of his sentence and has passed out of the probationary grade in which he is placed when he is first received into prison. At the time of writing (31st July) the system has been in operation for seven months only, but its beneficial effects are already apparent. Under former conditions the officers responsible for the administration of the Prisons Department were continually faced with pitiable cases of destitution and absolute want among the dependants of prisoners who were known to be energetically and intelligently carrying on the work allotted to them, and were thus creating revenue for the State. Departmentally there was no means of affording the slightest financial relief, although in recent years the actual cash receipts of the Department as a result of the proper use of its labour had grown from a few hundreds of pounds to over £39,000 per annum. Under the new system authorized last year a measure of relief can be given to the innocent sufferers from others' crimes. It may be thought that the payments now being made are less than is warranted by the value of the work performed by the individual prisoners, and that the dependent relatives are not receiving their proper quota of earnings. It must be remembered, however, that in this matter New Zealand is making a somewhat bold departure from established practice, and care must be taken that in the initial stages the scheme does not break down with its own weight. Even under the present limits, conservatism is and must be the watchword of the Department in administering the regulations. Unless full dependency of near relatives is conclusively established by careful inquiry through the recognized channels no prisoner is placed on the "wages list," although every man who works well and conducts himself satisfactorily receives a small payment per diem to establish a fund for his personal use on release. The total amount paid out to dependants of prisoners for the first seven months of the calendar year 1921 was £2,130. It will thus be seen that the cost per annum to the State, even of a limited scheme of "wages-payment," is by no means inconsiderable; but, in view of the fact that the cash earnings of the Department for last financial year amounted to over £39,000, it will, I think, be admitted that the dependants of the prisoners who help to bring in such a substantial annual return are entitled to the consideration they are now receiving.

SEGREGATION OF FEEBLE-MINDED CRIMINALS AND THE CRIMINAL INSANE.

For the past few years it has been apparent that some special provision should be made for those of our criminal population whose offences were due not to criminal intent, but to mental abnormality. In every prison or prison institution we have a distinct percentage of individuals who are clearly feeble-minded or are otherwise irresponsible. Under present conditions we have no option but to treat them in the same way as normal prisoners, with such allowances for their subnormality as can be made by the different controlling officers. We have no adequate means of providing special treatment or of recognizing to any appreciable extent the line of demarcation between prisoners who commit offences against the law while in full possession of their faculties and those who have no appreciation of the fact that they are so offending.

Another class of offender for whom provision must be made sooner or later is the criminal insane. This class comprises those individuals who have been charged with and are guilty of serious crimes, frequently of capital offences, but who have either been acquitted on the ground of insanity (whose sentences have been commuted on the same ground) or who have become insane after committal to prison. All these cases are transferred to the mental hospitals, where it has been found impossible to make the requisite provision for safe custody. Escapes of really dangerous criminals of homicidal tendencies are consequently hard to prevent, and the public safety is endangered.

In addition to the first two classes named there is yet another class who require special treatment and segregation, and that is the offender who is imprisoned for acts of sexual perversion due to physical disease or disability.

The three classes of criminals named could readily be confined in one special institution under a system of classification that would provide for treatment and useful work in the case of classes 1 and 3, and for safe custody and occupation in the case of the criminal insane. The place for such an institution is undoubtedly on the large estate in the neighbourhood of Te Awamutu on which the Tokanui Mental Hospital and the Waikeria Reformatory Prison have been established. The requisite buildings could be erected by prison labour at a minimum cost to the State. The necessary professional staff would be available at Tokanui, while the prison side of the work could be supervised and managed from the Waikeria Reformatory.

In other respects our prison administration has kept well abreast of the times, but in regard to the proper treatment, segregation, and control of the three classes of prisoners referred to we have lagged far behind older countries. It is possible that in the past we did not have sufficient offenders coming within the requisite category to justify the provision of a separate and special institution for their accommodation and treatment, but, unfortunately, that cannot be said at the present time. There are now more than enough cases to warrant the establishment of a properly planned and equipped building for this purpose alone.

GENERAL PROGRESS DURING THE YEAR.

Considerable progress was made during the year in building up the mental, moral, and physical welfare of the men and women committed to prison by the Courts of the country. Hitherto it has been the practice to give a *résumé* of our advance each year in a general paragraph, but, in view of the directions issued to all Departments to reduce the matter in their annual reports to the minimum,