

1922.
NEW ZEALAND.

PRISONS

(REPORT ON) FOR THE YEAR 1921-22.

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, 1922.

I have the honour to submit to Your Excellency the report of the Prisons Department for the year 1921-22.

I have, &c.,

E. P. LEE,
Minister in Charge of Prisons Department.

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

SIR,—

Prisons Department, Wellington, 15th July, 1922.

I have the honour to present the forty-first annual report of the Prisons Department, covering the financial year 1921-22, together with the report of the Inspector of Prisons and Supervisor of Prison Works for the same period, and the criminal statistics for the calendar year ended 31st December, 1921.

PRISON POPULATION: COMPARATIVE FIGURES.

The figures supplied by the Government Statistician show that the period of stress through which the country has been passing has had its expected reflex in the criminal statistics, the number of offenders received into the prisons being 4,181 for 1921, compared with 3,491 for 1920 and 3,207 and 3,150 for 1919 and 1918 respectively. The daily average number of prisoners in the whole of the prisons and prison institutions of the Dominion for 1921 was 1,065·60, against 939·69 in 1920, an increase of 125·91. When, however, last year's figures are compared with those of 1914 (979·81) it will be seen that the increase is only approximately 9 per cent. In view of the fact that 1914 was a prosperous year in spite of the war commencing therein, and that 1921 was one of our worst years for a generation, the increase in the number of offenders between the two years is comparatively small; while a reference to Table F of the statistics published with this report will show that while the proportion of criminals per 10,000 of population was 31·05 in 1914, it was only 16·50 in 1921. The same table shows a steady decline in the percentage of criminals per 10,000 of the population between 1914 and 1919. In the latter year the number was 15·18. Since then the proportion has only increased by 1·32, and so soon as prosperity returns to us there is little doubt that a reduction will again be recorded.

While from Table E of the criminal statistics it would appear that the number of New-Zealand-born convicted prisoners between the ages of fifteen and twenty-five has decreased from 300 in 1912 to 214 for 1921, *exclusive of Maoris*, our own experience is that there has been a regrettable increase in the number of youthful offenders received into the prisons during the past few years. To such an extent has this been the case that at one time during the past year we were compelled to cease drafting youthful offenders to the Invercargill Borstal Institution, where all prisoners under the age of twenty-five are sent, owing to lack of accommodation, and finally, to meet the difficulty, the age-limit had to be reduced to twenty-three. A reference to the record of the daily average at Invercargill for 1912 shows that the numbers were then 60·89, while for 1921 the daily average was 167·22, with an additional number at Waikeria and in other penal institutions. It must here be remarked, however, that our figures (unlike the Statistician's) include Maoris and youths who stated that they were born outside the Dominion. The Maoris between the ages of fifteen and twenty-five numbered, according to Table E1 of the statistics, forty-one. There is no information as to the period of residence in the Dominion of those who were recorded as having been born elsewhere.

To arrive at any definite conclusion as to the root cause of this undeniable increase in the number of youthful offenders it would be necessary to investigate the history of every individual case from the years of infancy to the date of the first offence. In the absence of such data it can only be said that a general survey makes it fairly clear that lack of parental control and care in the formative period of the boys' lives is largely responsible for their inclusion in our criminal statistics. Until by private or public organization the more neglected members of the youthful community are given the