

Reports having been obtained from expert officers of the Agricultural Department as to the suitability of the property, largely composed of punice country, for development, it was decided that an area of 10,000 acres forming part of the Hautu Block should be taken up by the Prisons Department. Surveys were at once commenced in order that the first section required for camp purposes might be allocated before the summer came to an end. An area of 690 acres, chiefly consisting of river-flat lying along the western bank of the Waiotaka Stream and bordering on the Tokaanu-Taupo main road having been delimited, steps were at once taken to establish a camp for the accommodation of the requisite labour. The method adopted was to transfer to the new camp-site the huts and other buildings that had been used in connection with the construction by the Prisons Department of the road from Waimarino to Lake Roto Aira. In view of the fact that all the material had to be removed a distance of not less than forty miles by horse and motor traction over rough roads, the operation was by no means a simple one. Every item of the work was successfully carried out by our own officers, assisted by prisoners. The huts and buildings were all re-established or re-erected in their new location, and the initial work of clearing, fencing, planting, &c., was in full swing, within the short space of four months. There are now twenty-three men at work, with a small staff of officers, and if we are able to provide further accommodation during the coming summer this number will be considerably increased and the progress of the work proportionately accelerated.

The officers we have placed in charge of the work are men who have had considerable experience with punice country, and with the advice and assistance that is always readily given by the Agricultural Department there is little doubt that this, the latest development of the Prison Department's activities, will prove a success.

It might be well to state for general information, in this the initial report on the Hautu prison camp, the policy you have laid down in connection with the development of this large area of country. Hautu is not intended to be merely a prison farm on a large scale. It is in reality the first direct attempt to develop land for settlement by prison labour. The scheme of operations is to break in, grass, and cultivate, where possible, the country block by block. As each block becomes ready for settlement it will be thrown open for selection, and our camps and gangs will be moved farther afield to prepare further areas for the class of settlement for which the land proves to be suitable. If success attend our efforts, and settlement is thus attracted to a district that would not otherwise carry any population for the next twenty years, the whole area of over 60,000 acres, excepting the bush-clad ranges and the poorest punice land, may eventually be brought into use by the agency of a Department that until the past few years was considered to be merely a drag upon the finances of the country.

Refuge for Derelicts.

In terms of your instructions, provision has now been made at New Plymouth for a number of old and derelict men who have been committed to prison for various offences, some of them of a certain sexual nature to which some old men are prone. Many of these men are not criminal in the ordinary sense of the term; some of them have been sentenced to imprisonment simply because they were drunken and derelict, without homes or friends to care for them. There being no public or private institutions to which the purely derelict class could be sent, the Magistrates have perforce committed them to prison as their only possible refuge. In many cases the authorities in charge of old people's homes and similar institutions had attempted to care for the men, but found it impossible to keep them from wandering away. This class of man, whether he has committed a criminal offence or not, has always been out of place in purely penal establishments, where it is difficult to differentiate their treatment, diet, &c., from that of ordinary able-bodied prisoners. Their segregation at New Plymouth, where the climatic conditions are favourable, and the minimum amount of labour will be required of them under a milder regime as to dietary and general conditions, is, of course, in the nature of an experiment. If your anticipations as to the success of this departure from our ordinary methods are justified, it may readily prove the forerunner of a scheme for establishing a permanent and properly equipped institution, to which Judges and Magistrates may, under amended legislation, commit the derelicts whose disposal is at present a cause of much trouble to the Courts and the police. Such an institution must necessarily be a "home," under restrictive rules, rather than a prison.

GENERAL REPORT ON INSTITUTIONS.

Auckland Prison.

A further increase in the prison population at Auckland is recorded. The increase in the number of receptions is most noticeable, no less than 1,362 males and 112 females having been received during the year, a total of 1,474. The schoolmaster reports: "During the year the school has not undergone so many changes as in previous years, and the standard of work attained is therefore considerably higher, though this is partly due to the appointment of an assistant teacher, which permits of more time being devoted to individual help. Promotions can now be made as soon as a pupil is ready for the change. Many are thus encouraged to study out of school hours, while the fact that the Senior Inspector has granted the schoolmaster in charge the privilege of awarding Standard V certificates is also a great incentive. The result is to be seen in the greater concentration of numbers in the upper classes of the school. One pupil was successful in obtaining a certificate of proficiency for Standard VI last December. A good spirit of work is being shown by most of the classes, and there is a noticeable improvement in the quality of the English subjects."

The chief industries—quarrying, bootmaking, and matmaking—have been carried on with satisfactory results. The revenue from the quarry has easily surpassed that of any previous year, and the development of this industry is a credit to the supervising officers. The prisoners employed in the