

Analysis of Farm and Industry Productions used for Institutional Purposes.

Institution.	Foots.	Clothing	Timber and Firewood.	Farm and Garden Produce.	Total.
	£	£	£	£	£
Auckland	1,736	5,267	..	219	7,222
Hautu	..	..	..	129	129
Invercargill	893	..	37	1,071	2,001
Napier	..	..	..	10	10
New Plymouth	..	..	..	59	59
Paparua	..	..	..	666	666
Point Halswell	..	..	..	129	129
Waikeria	..	..	..	634	634
Waikane	..	..	868*	..	868
Wi Tako	..	..	78	22	100
	2,629	5,267	983	2,939	11,818

* Includes £393 on mill buildings and tram-lines.

As the reports of the controlling officers indicate the progress made in various directions during the past year, it is not necessary that I should say anything further than to remark that in every direction progress has been well maintained since the last report was presented. There are, however, one or two matters worthy of special reference. In the first place, the policy initiated by the present Government a few years ago of bringing in pumice lands which were formerly considered of little or no value and, by utilizing the labour of prisoners, rendering such lands productive has now passed the experimental stage. The results fully demonstrate that such lands, if properly handled, can be made commercially valuable. The first block of 680 acres is now almost ready for disposal, and arrangements are being made for the sale of this, the first farm. As some doubt has from time to time been expressed as to whether such land could be successfully treated, the Minister's direction that a thorough and exhaustive examination should be made into the whole subject has been given effect to, and the verdict of an independent expert (with fifty years' experience) who went specially into the matter has turned out to be distinctly favourable to the project. It is now intended to press on more expeditiously with the work of bringing in further areas and making them ready for intending settlers by commencing operations on three additional farm areas. It is hoped by this means that the Department will be in a position to hand over ready for settlement at least two additional farms of from 400 to 600 acres each every year. In this matter valuable pioneering work is being done, and at the same time those who have fallen are being converted into useful workers and given the opportunity of gaining a practical knowledge of farming in all its branches.

UTILIZATION OF PRISON LABOUR.

One of the greatest difficulties encountered by the Prisons Department is that of finding suitable remunerative work for prisoners, owing to the difficulty experienced in disposing of the prison-made products. On the one hand we have those who constantly demand that prisons should be made self-supporting, while on the other are those who strenuously object to the sale of anything produced by prison labour. The question is, Are the prisons to be run solely as a money-making concern or in the best interests of those committed there? It is not likely that the former method should find favour when the moral and not the financial value of the men comes to be considered, and when—to quote Sir Ruggles-Brise—the principal aim of imprisonment is to secure moral reform of the prisoner and not to make money to enable the Treasury to meet the expenses of prisons. It is only of recent years that the theory of a self-supporting prison has ceased to be attractive. Sir Ruggles-Brise goes on to say, "The sentiment against prison labour is to a large extent a legacy of the past when conditions were widely different. It is difficult, if not impossible, to reconcile the prohibition of useful and productive labour without a system of earning with the insistent and reasonable demand that the conditions of prison life shall be made as reformatory as possible. From the dawn of prison reform labour was predicated as the most essential element of reform. The outcry against undue competition with free labour is to be condemned as inhuman, because it is contrary to the law of humanity, which cannot be attenuated even in the case of a criminal. The outcry is unreasonable for the following reasons: (a) That the amount of competition by prison labour is so small as to be hardly appreciable; (b) that all productivity from any source is a gain to the community; (c) that the product of prison labour relieves the cost of maintaining prisons; (d) that the importance of reforming prisoners by labour outweighs all economic considerations."

It would therefore appear that, in the opinion of one who is recognized as being one of the foremost men in the world where the welfare of prisoners is concerned, useful remunerative work is one of the greatest agencies in connection with the rehabilitation of men and women who have been sent to prison; and after forty years' experience in prisons and amongst prisoners I have formed the same conclusion. There is no use, however, in producing commodities if the sale of such is prohibited. Many years ago I, myself, have seen men breaking road-metal which was afterwards wheeled into pits and covered up with clay. I have also seen heaps of clay (100 yards of it) wheeled for 50 yards and stacked, and the same clay wheeled back to its former position again, just for the sake of giving the men something to do. The baneful effects of such action upon both officers and prisoners can be readily imagined.