

MISCELLANEOUS IMPROVEMENTS IN ORGANIZATION.

During the year considerable progress has been made in effecting improvements in matters pertaining to the general administration of the Department. Some of the main points in this connection may be mentioned :—

- (a) Extension and development of the Borstal system.
- (b) Extension of arrangements for after-care of released prisoners.
- (c) Extension of educational facilities and arrangements for lectures, &c.
- (d) The relinquishing of certain unprofitable and competitive industries, and the extension of farm-development work.
- (e) The extension of production for institutional purposes, with the object of making the Department, as far as possible, self-sustaining. (NOTE.—(1) Last year practically the whole of the Department's requirements in potatoes (approximately 200 tons) were grown by the Department, while a similar quantity was disposed in the open market. (2) Baker's ovens have been erected at most of the institutions to enable the Department to bake practically the whole of its bread requirements.)

Many improvements have also been made in the equipment and facilities at the several institutions to enable the working of the Department to be carried out more effectively and in keeping with current ideas in penology. Some of the chief of these are as follows :—

- (a) Flooring of cells and improved ventilation at the Mount Eden Prison.
- (b) Improved bathing facilities at Mount Eden, Wi Tako, and Invercargill.
- (c) Improved accommodation at several of the institutions.
- (d) Improved food-utensils. The standard bowls, plates, and pannikins on issue have been either enameledware or tinware. Replacements are being effected in aluminiumware.
- (e) Erection of repairs shop at Mount Eden to enable quarry-repairs to be effected economically and expeditiously.
- (f) Extension of facilities for pig husbandry at Wi Tako, Waikeria, Paparua, and Invercargill.
- (g) Extension of dairy industry at Waikeria and Invercargill.
- (h) Erection and equipment of new laundry and drying-room at Point Halswell to enable the institution to undertake Government laundering-work.

The financial and stores account has revealed the need for considerable improvement and in many cases complete overhaul. The installation of a standard system of accounting has progressed satisfactorily, and bringing in improvements steadily and not *en bloc* has been found advisable, to allow for officers' adaptability. In the principal institutions the clerical officers are equal to all that is required by the Department, the Treasury, and Audit Office, but some clerks are not qualified to undertake work requiring knowledge of advanced book-keeping and accountancy. The progress of the accounting system has in some instances been delayed to meet this consideration, and has been set out so as to provide for easy following by all institutions.

The following sets out the main alterations which have affected all institutions. There have, of course, been many matters of individual institution's concern which are not referred to.

Account Methods and Stores Organization.

Standardized Forms of Annual and other Returns.—Many improvements have been effected by the institution of standard forms for monthly, quarterly, and annual returns.

Estimates of and Control of Public Works Expenditure.—Prior to 1926-27 the annual estimating of Public Works expenditure on erection and maintenance of prison buildings and works, was unsatisfactory. Estimates were drawn up without methodical consideration of all requirements of each institution. Issues of funds for individual works were often arranged without consultation with the Prison headquarters, with the result that available funds were over-allocated to some institutions and under-allocated to others. At the 1st April each year each controlling officer is now required to submit detailed requirements for the ensuing twelve months, indicating the precise nature and approximate cost of each work, and the need and state of same—*i.e.*, whether contemplated, already under correspondence, authorized, in progress, or whether already incurred. The Department is now probably for the first time able to render an annual estimate with supporting definite data as to each work for which funds are to be asked of Parliament. Although these funds are under the nominal control of the Public Works Department, they are virtually placed at the disposal of the Prisons Department, and a closer supervision of issue of available funds is now being carried out, so that they are applied with more heed to the relative requirements of each institution.

Tradesman Officers Time-sheets.—Until early last year the existing method of claiming salaries from the Public Works Department for tradesmen officers engaged on erection of prison buildings was neither satisfactory nor accurate. From the 1st April, 1926, each tradesman warden has been required to submit a detailed time-sheet of his daily duties, differentiating between construction, maintenance, and disciplinary duties, so that the actual time engaged on the first-mentioned could be accurately valued. Prior to this, more or less arbitrary times were assessed, and a deduction of 25 per cent. made, giving in effect merely a basis for approximate claims against the Public Works Department.

Value of Officers' Services in Industries.—This important charge against prison industries had previously been relied on from annual returns, which were merely estimates, and hence inaccurate. From the 1st April, 1926, an accurate monthly return was commenced from each institution, which forms the basis of annual published accounts and monthly industry cost accounts.

Rates for Prison Labour supplied to other Departments.—No definite rate had been laid down for these charges against other Departments and local bodies until the 1st July, 1926, when this matter was placed on a uniform basis and provision made to cover supervision which had not previously been charged.