

When the large proportion of unproductive and inefficient labour at the Department's disposal is considered it is obvious that it is hardly possible to make the prisons self-supporting. Last year they were self-sustaining to the extent of approximately 50 per cent. of the total expenditure incurred. Until they are wholly self-supporting additional charges for grants to dependants will obviously constitute a further charge on the Consolidated Fund, which, of course, will throw an added burden on the taxpayers generally.

It is to be borne in mind that in this country the care of those in indigent circumstances is the responsibility of the local authorities, through various Charitable Aid Boards, whose funds are subsidized by the Government for this purpose. Whilst the Department is thoroughly in accord with the institution of a scheme for the proper care and maintenance of dependants of prisoners, the incidence of the burden is questioned. In view of the subsidy payments it is considered that the responsibility should be shared with the local authorities. These bodies are usually more closely in touch with the local conditions and the actual circumstances of the dependants, and in this respect are in a better position to gauge the degree of necessity of the cases. The amounts paid out in grants for the maintenance of dependants last year was £8,553, while £6,827 was paid out by way of earnings to prisoners discharged, or sent to dependants at the prisoners' request. The following view has been expressed by an oversea authority in connection with the general principle of paying wages to dependants: "While public sentiment admits of the employment of prisoners on remunerative work outside the prison walls where a wage can be earned, a system of wages for the support of a prisoner's family is possible; but where it is only possible to employ prisoners on ordinary prison tasks, rendering little or no profit, it is obvious that such system, which implies that the taxpayer should maintain the families of those who have broken the law, would not be tolerated."

CLASSIFICATION.

Classification of prisoners is a necessary preliminary to any attempt, in a system of reformatory treatment, at the individualization of punishment. It is essential to segregate the various classes of offenders, so that appropriate treatment may be accorded to each offender.

In New Zealand the classification is based principally upon the age of the offender and the extent of his criminal experience, and to a certain degree on the nature of the offence. Recent studies of the criminal have shown that there is a positive correlation between the mental and, to some extent, the physical make up of the criminal and the kind of crime he commits. The difficulty in connection with any system of classification is that the more intensively it is carried out, the greater is the expense involved in providing suitable establishments. The last Prisons Congress expressed the opinion that classification cannot be effectively done by the separation of classes within an institution. It will thus be seen that the ideal of the separate institution for each class of offender would be an expensive matter, quite apart from the cost of transport to and from such institutions. The observation in the last annual report of the English Prison Commissioners is apropos in this connection: "The obstacle to the classification of prisoners is the expense of the journeys. The cheapest method is for all offenders, of whatever kind, to serve their sentences nearest to the Court which sentenced them; and in the present circumstances financial considerations may prevent the general introduction of any other system for some time to come." Local financial considerations at the present time constitute the main hindrance to development in this direction in New Zealand, but within the limits of the facilities available considerable progress has been made.

The Borstal system, which has been defined elsewhere in this report, affords appropriate provision for dealing with youthful offenders, and thus obviates the danger of contamination with more hardened criminals. Classification within the Borstals is carried out as far as practicable on the basis of a study of the mentality of each offender. At each Borstal there is what is known as a special or retardates class for dealing with subnormal and feeble-minded inmates.

With regard to the older prisoners, men sentenced to periods of reformatory detention and simple imprisonment involving hard labour undergo a period of observation in city prisons, and those considered suitable and who show that they merit a measure of trust being reposed in them are transferred to the farm camps, where the open-air life, the healthy and well-ordered conditions, are important factors in bringing about a submergence of the tendencies towards anti-social conduct. The more confirmed criminals and those who are considered unsafe to society are kept at the stronger city prisons, and are engaged on intra-mural occupations where there is little danger of escape.

The Wanganui Prison has been specially equipped to make it suitable for older prisoners who are either infirm or are bordering on a state of senility. The view is held by many authorities on criminology that special consideration should be shown to what are called senile delinquents, and that mental changes caused by age deserve particular attention. It has been suggested that the age of senility should be set down at seventy-two, and that special procedure should be provided for the aged offenders who have no previous criminal record. The Department recognizes that ordinary prison treatment is not appropriate for such cases, and experience has shown that where nursing care is essential there are not the proper facilities for dealing with such cases in a prison. In the equipment of the Wanganui Prison special consideration has been shown to the class of persons held in detention, and, though it is a house of detention, the association rooms are more like an old men's home than an ordinary prison.

Prisoners classed as sexual perverts are transferred to the New Plymouth Prison. This course is desirable on account of the peculiar propensities of such prisoners and the difficulty of dealing with this class at farms where they would not continually be under strict surveillance. A study of the position in the light of experience at this institution gives rise to certain doubts as to the wisdom of segregating all of a kind in one institution. The result is to create a mental atmosphere that is