

many cases, he is the product of our past system of applying short terms of imprisonment to young offenders, for in many cases young prisoners have been apprenticed in crime through early criminal associations in our prisons.

In considering the remedy for the present state of affairs, although it is the popular thing to enlarge on the psychological aspect of crime, a study of the position shows that there is an urgent demand for greater consideration from the sociological standpoint. A study of the case-histories of many of the offenders shows that the main causes of delinquency are neglectful parents, lack of proper parental control, irreligiosity, bad companions, and bad social conditions. In most cases the delinquent is deficient in the social instinct, self-control, and sense of responsibility, and in fact, almost entirely lacks those higher qualities that hold society together and make for decent standards of conduct. If the increase in juvenile crime is to be met effectively it must be dealt with long before the prison stage. It is a challenge to parents to a deeper sense of their responsibilities, and of the need for training their children in self-control.

STAFF MATTERS.

During the year Mr. T. Vincent, Superintendent of the Mount Eden Prison, and Mr. J. Scanlon, Superintendent of the Wellington Terrace Prison, retired on superannuation. Both of these officers rendered long and loyal service to the Department.

The death during the year of Mr. W. J. Parkes, Gaoler at Timaru, is recorded with regret.

Several changes have taken place in the disciplinary staff. The total number of disciplinary and instructional officers at the 31st March last was 235, as compared with 219 at the end of the previous year.

In conclusion, I desire to place on record my appreciation of the zealous manner in which the officers of the various institutions have carried out their duties. They have striven to give effect to the policy of the Department in regard to the treatment of offenders. The local controlling officers and the Head Office staff have co-operated loyally in an endeavour to improve and maintain the effective and economical administration of the Department.

B. L. DALLARD,
Controller-General of Prisons.

INSPECTOR OF PRISONS TO THE CONTROLLER-GENERAL OF PRISONS.

I have the honour to submit my report for the year 1926–27 regarding the inspection of the various prisons and institutions under the control of the Department.

Visits of inspection were made during the year to all prisons, prison camps, and Borstal institutions, and, when circumstances necessitated it, special visits were made to certain institutions. The policy decided upon last year whereby all prison buildings throughout the Dominion are inspected at regular intervals by officials of the Public Works Department obviated the necessity for frequent visits for the same purpose by the Inspector of Prisons. The new system of building-inspection ensures that the existing properties are kept in a proper state of repair, and that new buildings in course of erection are constructed on practical and economical lines under the supervision of experienced officers.

On the occasion of my visits to institutions inmates are given an opportunity to voice their requests or complaints, and as a result a comparatively large number of interviews were granted during the year to the longer-sentenced men. Complaints by prisoners against officers alleging undue severity of treatment are extremely rare, and during the past year such accusations were made at one institution only. The matter was inquired into by Visiting Justices of the Peace and the officers against whom the allegations were made were exonerated from blame. The improvement in the dietary scale—particularly the variation which permits of the issue of a small ration of meat with breakfast—is appreciated by the men employed on hard manual labour. A small section of the habitual criminals and long-sentenced prisoners consider that the dietary scale should provide a greater variety of items, but the majority of the men admit that the food in quality is good and in quantity reasonable. It is somewhat remarkable that prisoners who persist in returning to prison are the class who find the prison dietary scale insufficient and lacking in variety. In nearly all the principal prisons and institutions the bread ration is now made on the premises by inmates under supervision. The quality of the institution-made bread has been favourably commented upon by the medical officers and visiting officials.

The subordinate prison officers are familiar with the regulations, and, as a body, they endeavour to carry out their duties in a conscientious manner. To attain an absolute state of uniformity in methods of carrying out duties it would be necessary to have all probationer warders trained under suitable experienced instructors in one institution, from which they could be drafted as required. A difficulty is being experienced in obtaining suitable Borstal officers from the candidates offering for the service. The Superintendents of these institutions give assistance to any officer who exhibits a desire to fit himself for his duties, but a class of instruction and study on the lines you have already suggested would be of considerable advantage to the officers who are genuinely interested in this important branch of the service.

D. A. MACKINTOSH,
Inspector of Prisons.