

BORSTAL INSTITUTIONS.

Invercargill Borstal Institution for Lads.

(Superintendent, Mr. C. G. L. POLLOCK.)

At the beginning of the year there were 254 male inmates in custody, 244 of whom were Borstal inmates and 10 of the Invercargill Prison. During the year 108 inmates were received into the Borstal Institution and 128 inmates discharged or otherwise disposed of, leaving 224 male inmates in custody at 31st December, 1928; 79 males were received into the prison and 83 discharged or otherwise disposed of, leaving 6 inmates in custody at the end of the year.

Ninety-three Borstal inmates were released on the recommendation of the Parole Board, and 6 discharged on the expiration of their sentences under section 16 of the Borstal Institution Establishment Act. The daily average number of inmates in custody was 235.9 in the Borstal Institution and 6.69 in the prison. The conduct and industry of the inmates has been exceptionally good.

There were three escapes from custody, two inmates escaping on the same day, and one some days afterwards. All three were apprehended by Borstal officers within a few days. Two of the escapees received further terms of detention in the Borstal Institution, and the third man was declared an habitual criminal and transferred to Auckland Prison. Eighteen Borstal inmates were admitted to the Southland Hospital during the year, six admissions being the results of accidents. The health of the inmates was otherwise exceptionally good. There were no deaths.

At the beginning of the year we were honoured by a visit from Their Excellencies the Governor-General, Sir Charles Fergusson, and Lady Alice Fergusson. The Vice-Regal party were shown over the institution, and the opportunity was taken of explaining to them the various phases of the work, in which they evinced keenest interest. At the conclusion of the inspection the party adjourned to the recreation area, where the lads were anxiously awaiting Their Excellencies' arrival. After Lady Alice Fergusson had been presented with a bouquet on behalf of the Borstal by the smallest among its junior inmates, His Excellency very kindly addressed the lads, who listened with close attention. The message that was delivered will not be readily forgotten; it appealed to the better impulses of every boy present. At the conclusion of the ceremony His Excellency specially requested to be introduced to the members of the staff, to whom also he delivered an appropriate address.

Throughout another year the work in the evening school classes has been carried on successfully, though the range of progress was considerably reduced by the limited time allocated. The opportunities awaiting development in this important field are such that the appointment of a full-time teacher should now be considered. There are sufficient pupils offering to justify the commencement of daily instruction in the ordinary school subjects. The more adequate time thus given to lessons and the closer continuity secured would bring about a marked advance in the educational value of the classes.

The local branch of the Workers' Educational Association has interested itself in the boys of the institution, and are now having a weekly W.E.A. class in economics. We are fortunate in having as a lecturer Mr. F. C. Lopdell, M.A., whose expositions of the subject are highly appreciated by those privileged to attend the class. The students are very keen on their work, and the results obtained will compare more than favourably with those secured in other classes of the W.E.A.

The Saturday morning classes in wool-classing and agriculture, under the capable direction of Mr. Thomas Mathews, Agricultural Instructor to the Southland Education Board, have had another very successful year. We are again indebted to Mr. Andrew Wilson, who kindly provided all the wool required for instructional purposes, and also to the Mackinnon Trustees for providing special prizes for the three candidates standing highest in the annual examination. In this connection I cannot do better than give the following quotation from Mr. Mathews' report: "It gives me very great pleasure to report on the success of the wool-classing students at the recent examination for prizes presented by the Mackinnon Trustees. In comparison with last year there has been, this year, a marked improvement in the quality of the work done. Considering that my time is somewhat limited for thorough instruction in both the practical and theoretical work, as well as endeavouring to keep the agricultural course going, the examination was most pleasing indeed, and one of the most successful that I have carried out, and is, I think, a credit to the students, and a testimony of their keenness to become competent wool-classers."

It is encouraging to all concerned to learn from a former student of the class that he has been successful in obtaining a situation in the wool business, and that he is continuing his studies with a view to further improvement. When it is remembered that this lad received his first wool-classing lesson in the Borstal, it will be admitted that the efforts being made to give a sound vocational training are in the way of being justified by results. The institution owes a debt of gratitude to Mr. Mathews for the excellent service which, without material reward, he has for two years past rendered on behalf of its inmates.

The technical classes in sign-writing, carpentry, and bricklaying have been held regularly throughout the year, and the progress made in these crafts reflects the greatest credit on the officers in charge of these departments of instruction. Proof of the efficiency of the training is visible in the extensive building-works carried out wholly by the skilled labour within the institution, the only outside tradesmen employed being those required to install electric lighting.

The farm report appended hereto deals with the various operations being carried on and the returns of products obtained. It must not, however, be overlooked that the value of that department is to be assessed in other than material products. Nowadays it is being urged that education should have close relationship to the industrial life of the community, so that the predominance of agricultural industry in New Zealand should be met by an educational bias in that direction. It can be justly claimed for the Borstal that it observes this principle, for it provides, under skilled supervision, practical training in fencing, draining, tillage, the growing of crops and pastures, dairying, care and feeding