

PRISONS AND PENAL INSTITUTIONS: EPITOME OF REPORTS OF CONTROLLING OFFICERS.

AUCKLAND PRISON.

(Superintendent, Mr. J. DICKISON.)

At the commencement of the year there were 420 males and 17 females in custody. During the year 1,576 males and 85 females were received, whilst 1,610 males and 83 females were discharged or otherwise disposed of, leaving in the prison on the night of the 31st December, 1932, 386 males and 19 females.

Two prisoners absconded during the year (one from District Hospital and one from working party at Clive Road cottages). Both were subsequently recaptured by the police and returned to prison.

I am pleased to be in the position to report that no executions were carried out during the year.

There were three deaths during the twelve months, two of which occurred in the District Hospital and one in the prison infirmary.

The excellent standard of health recorded in recent years has been well maintained during the period under review, as will be evidenced by the fact that although the daily average of prisoners in custody during the twelve months was 448 the daily average number on the sick muster was 7.7 males and 0.574 females. It will be conceded that the reception of 1,661 prisoners in one year means the handling of almost every type of individual, quite a number of whom are in indifferent health upon entering the institution, thus necessitating their receiving such medical attention as is requisite to bring them to a proper state of fitness. Others when received are in such a low state of health that medical treatment is essential throughout the whole period of incarceration, and when due allowance is made for such cases, and also for the number of prisoners treated periodically as the result of minor injuries sustained on the works, the low daily average on the sick muster leaves no doubt that the health of the inmates as a whole has been excellently maintained.

I have again to express my appreciation of the valued co-operation of the Medical Superintendent of the Auckland Mental Hospital, who so readily deals with all requests for the examination of mentally defective prisoners, and thus enables the expeditious transfer of these unfortunate individuals to that institution.

The school, with an average roll muster of thirty-one, is held on three nights weekly, and continues to be directed by L. Grice, M.A. The results of the annual examinations, as already submitted to you, were very satisfactory on the whole, and disclosed the value of the school in the all-important matter of assisting in the rehabilitation of the type of prisoner who has previously found the lack of education an almost insuperable barrier to progress in the outside world. In this connection, the examination results showed a small percentage as being "weak," but the value of the work done by these particular men was not indicated by their marks, for the Schoolmaster stresses the fact that they have been working "against the odds" with very commendable application, and have made considerable progress on the standard displayed when first admitted to the class. The keenness of the prisoners is undoubted, and shows that they fully appreciate the opportunity extended by the Department.

One hundred and seventy-seven breaches of the regulations were dealt with by Visiting Justices during the year, whilst a number of minor offences were dealt with by myself. Quite a number of the prisoners were dealt with on more than one occasion, and when allowance is made for the class of prisoner in this institution, and the fact that the daily average for the year was 448, it will be admitted that the conduct has, on the whole, been of a very satisfactory standard.

Evening drill has been continued three nights weekly under the instruction of Principal Warder Douglas, the twenty-six prisoners participating in the exercises benefiting considerably therefrom, particularly as they are employed indoors daily.

Owing to the strict necessity for economy in every possible direction, very little work of a permanent nature has been executed during the year.

As it is the intention of the Department to commence the manufacture of tobacco at the beginning of the ensuing year, the magazine buildings, which were taken over from the Defence Department some time ago, have been brought into use as a storeroom and factory respectively, and all the requisite structural alterations have been carried out with prison labour in readiness for a commencement of operations. Similarly, with a view to limiting expenditure, practically the whole of the necessary equipment was manufactured in the prison workshops. This new industry is being supervised by Mr. Lowe, of the Department of Agriculture, and thanks are due to him for his valuable co-operation during the preparatory stages.

With a view to reducing the power and light charges for the institution, the work of changing over from direct to alternating current was put in hand and completed early in the year, and has resulted in a very considerable saving to the Department.

A further saving was effected by the alteration of the telephone system throughout the institution, and the reduced service is working quite satisfactorily without loss of efficiency.

A very necessary expenditure was incurred in providing fire-escapes to several of the officers' cottages, the whole of the iron work being made in the prison workshops to effect as much saving as possible.

A general clearance of disused plant, &c., which has been written off over a period of years, and has been lying around the quarry and other prison areas, was recently made, and the sale of same as scrap iron was effected.