

More care is also taken by the Prisons Board in so far as Borstal dischargees are concerned, in seeing that arrangements are made for the placement of these lads before they are released. A large number are absorbed on farms, as the majority acquire a good general training in farm work. So far as women are concerned, the small percentage who return is due to the well-organized after-care. The Courts also have recognized more the inability under existing circumstances of many offenders to pay fines, and time has been allowed to enable payment to be made by instalments.

The number of distinct persons received into prison is always less than the figure for "receptions," as many offenders are received more than once into prison during the year. This applies chiefly to that stage army of petty recidivists embracing vagrants, inebriates, and minor offenders whose lapses are more in the nature of nuisances than crimes, but who inflate the prison statistics.

The number of distinct prisoners received during 1933 was 2,731, as compared with 3,401 for 1932, a drop of 670 persons, or just under 25 per cent.

The daily average also showed a decline, the figure for 1933 being 1,542, as compared with 1,669 for the previous year. There is no fixed ratio between the number of receptions and the daily average, as this is influenced as much by the length of sentence as by the number of persons received. In New Zealand the average is definitely affected by the length of sentence, as the tendency is for the Courts to impose salutary terms of reformative detention and borstal detention. That this policy is efficacious is evidenced by the small percentage who offend again after release from these methods of treatment.

The ratio of distinct persons committed to prison during 1933 to each 10,000 of the general population was 17·75, which is also substantially down on the figure 22·29 for 1932. It has been stated by critics that the prison population in New Zealand is three to four times that of England on a population basis. It is difficult to draw exact comparisons, and it must be borne in mind in a country such as New Zealand with a comparatively small population and an efficient police system the percentage of undetected crime is relatively small, but it is interesting to observe that according to the latest statistics the ratio in the Dominion to each 10,000 of the general population is within just three units of that of England, and it has to be borne in mind that in the Dominion statistics all receptions, even those at police lock-ups for twenty-four hours, are included, whereas in England, since the passing of the Criminal Justice Administration Act, 1914, following which a remarkable decline in prison commitments was witnessed, a great many short-sentence prisoners are not included in the prison statistics. Sections 12 and 13 of that Act provide for dealing with petty offenders summarily, and the latter section provides that no person shall be sentenced to imprisonment by a Court of summary jurisdiction for less than five days, but that such Court may, in lieu of imprisonment, order detention in a suitable place such as police cells, bridewells, or other approved place of detention.

In an address given last year by the Chairman of the English Prison Commission, the following statement appears: "The Prison Commissioners in their reports pointed out that the decline in prison population was not due to a decrease in crime, but was due partly to a decrease in minor offences such as drunkenness and disorderly conduct, and partly due to the fact that a smaller proportion of the persons found guilty of crime were sent to prison and a larger proportion being dealt with by alternative methods such as fines and probation . . . actually the statistics show that crime has increased substantially."

It is the crime statistics and not the prison population that are the true criteria as to whether the methods utilized in the administration of criminal justice reasonably fulfil their function in protecting society. In England it has recently been officially stated that crime against property has increased to a point where the pre-war level had been reached and passed, and that the policy of leniency had to be considerably modified in an effort to "stem the tide of crime." In the latest report of the Prison Commissioners, the following significant paragraph appears: "The increase in the number of larger sentences (five years and upwards) indicates a tendency which, if it continues, will be reflected in a greatly increased male convict population in after-years."

New Zealand, despite the inevitable increase in the number of offences against property symptomatic of the times in recent years, through the pursuance of a cautious policy in dealing with its criminals, has witnessed a drop in its prison receptions since the immediate pre-war years from 31 per 10,000 of the general population, to 17·75 for 1933, and, except for temporary variations reflective of industrial conditions, this decline has been steady and definite, and is indicative of a diminution in crime as well as in the prison population, because those dealt with by way of fine and probation have also diminished. The following comparative table shows the receptions, number of distinct persons, the daily average, and the ratio to population in New Zealand for the past five years:—

Year.	Total Offenders received.	Total Distinct Offenders.	Daily Average in Custody.	Ratio to 10,000 of Population.
1933	4,157	2,731	1,542·86	17·75
1932	5,198	3,401	1,669·17	22·29
1931	5,340	3,203	1,634·39	21·17
1930	4,909	2,864	1,466·02	19·19
1929	4,357	2,596	1,438·26	17·62

Hereunder is set out a table showing the offences classified in three main groups, for the immediate pre-war quinquennium, as compared with the past five years. It will be observed that there has been no increase in crime against the person, and a steady decline under the heading of miscellaneous