

Although the New Zealand system was based on the principles laid down by the founder of the English system, Sir Evelyn Ruggles-Brise, in New Zealand provision is made for a higher age group than is the case under the English Prevention of Crime Act, which restricts admission age to twenty-one years.

During the year under review 112 (168) lads, and 24 (35) young women were committed to Borstal direct by the Courts; and 15 (40) youths and 1 girl were transferred from other institutions to Borstal for training and discipline. The figures for the previous year are shown in parentheses. The reduction in numbers is sympathetic with the decrease in commitments referred to earlier in this report in connection with the general statistics.

Since the Waikeria and Invercargill Institutions have been established, 4,290 young men have passed through them, and of this number just a fraction over 14 per cent. have again come in conflict with the law after release.

The results in regard to young women are even better, although in most countries it is recognized that the rehabilitation of young women offenders is more difficult than in the case of men. From Point Halswell Borstal 185 young women have been released since its inception, and only 20, or barely 11 per cent., have subsequently made an appearance before the Courts.

As stated in my report last year, considering the difficulties associated with existing economic conditions in the way of rehabilitation, the results speak for the efficacy of the system and bear ample evidence of the success attending the work of those responsible for both the in-care and the after-care of these young people. Sympathetic oversight after release is more and more becoming recognized as of equal importance to the matter of training whilst in custody.

The Department is specially indebted to the Women's Borstal Association for its unflagging interest in the girls at Point Halswell and its care for them when released; also to its associates throughout the Dominion who are performing a most valuable public service.

The Voluntary Probation Committees, despite increasing difficulties, have continued to co-operate with Probation Officers, and members of Rotary and the Justices' Association have also assisted the Department.

The Borstal system is an integral part of the prisons system, and whilst reclamation and the protection of society should be the primary objective of all modern penal methods, the distinction drawn between the treatment of young and old offenders is that under the Borstal system the problem of delinquency is dealt with in the incipient stages in order to arrest anti-social tendencies before they become established habits—the Prevention of Crime Act features discipline and training rather than punishment—whereas with older and more experienced offenders punishment and deterrence necessarily loom more largely in the scheme of treatment.

At the Borsstals the curriculum embraces a balanced round of work, education, and recreation. The indefinite and irregular time factor in regard to the term of detention makes it impracticable to embark upon any system of apprenticeship, nor does the Department pretend to turn out fully fledged journeymen tradesmen from the Borsstals. What is aimed at is to inculcate habits of industry and to equip a lad in a practical way so that he can take up an honest calling on release. "Training in orderly and industrial habits is of higher value than the teaching of a special trade." (English Committee report.) All phases of farming are carried on, and New Zealand, being mainly a primary-producing country, this calling affords the most ready avenue for absorption of lads when released. The Department has received many expressions of satisfaction from farmers who have taken lads into their employ as to the practical value of the training given at Borstal. There are special tradesmen instructors on the staff who teach the inmates in such handicrafts as carpentering, bricklaying, blacksmithing, bootmaking, tailoring, painting and sign-writing, plumbing, plastering, cooking and baking, gardening, and wool-classing.

On the recreational side, besides regular physical drill, the various seasonal outdoor sports are indulged in, and in these activities inmates compete regularly with outside teams. The inculcation of the team spirit and the breaking-down of individualism is an important step towards socialization.

Educational facilities are provided through the medium of regular classes conducted by qualified teachers, and, in addition, special talks by visiting lecturers are given on cultural subjects calculated to develop a sense of civic and social responsibility.

The small percentage who relapse after release is an indication of the community value of the borstal system, but more positive and more gratifying is the definite knowledge of the large number who, after what might be regarded as a brief post-adolescent lapse, again settle down and become useful law-abiding citizens. It is sometimes stated that many who are sent to Borstal should have been dealt with by probation, but experience shows that one of the most important factors in correcting these characterial deviations is a complete removal from the surroundings and influences associated with the criminal conduct that has been the cause of the downfall of the young person concerned.

INDUSTRIES AND DEVELOPMENT.

For a number of years the development of primary and secondary industries to supplement the less adequate domestic industries and to eliminate useless task labour has been a special feature in the administration of our prisons and borstal institutions. This policy is not only a partial remedy for the difficulty of providing work for all inmates, but has enabled a variety of suitable vocational occupations to be provided, and has had the benefit of equipping many prisoners to take up some useful occupation on release. It is essential always to keep in mind that prisoners will return to a life of liberty. The pursuance of this policy has also assisted materially in keeping down the cost of prison maintenance to the general taxpayer.

For the past four years activity in the secondary industries has been substantially curtailed on account of the lack of demand for saleable products, and, of course, farming results have suffered severely on account of the drop in the prices for primary produce.