

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

AUCKLAND PRISON.

(Superintendent, Mr. J. DICKISON.)

At the commencement of the year there were 386 males and 19 females in custody. During the year 1,200 males and 59 females were received, whilst 1,257 males and 62 females were discharged or otherwise disposed of, leaving in the prison on the night of the 31st December, 1933, 329 males and 16 females.

Attention is drawn to the fact that the receptions in 1933 totalled 1,259, as against 1,661 in 1932, a decrease of 402. A factor which has been largely responsible for such a marked decrease in the one year is that quite a goodly percentage of the individuals who in recent times have been received on more than one occasion in the one year to undergo short terms in respect of minor breaches of the law—viz., drunkenness, breach of prohibition orders, idle and disorderly, &c.—were drafted during the current year to various country unemployment camps, and have been apparently content to remain away from the city.

I feel convinced that the avenues of employment offered under the camp system, and the consequent break from unsuitable environments, is going a long way towards the rehabilitation of quite a number of the men concerned, who previously were speedily drifting to the stage when their type becomes incorrigible.

Eighteen habitual criminals (male), 20 reformative detention (male), 1 reformative detention (female), 29 hard labour (male), and 9 hard labour (female) were released during the year on the recommendation of the Prisons Board.

Two prisoners were concerned in the only escape effected from the institution during the year. Both were subsequently recaptured by the police and returned to prison.

The extreme penalty of the law—the sentence of death—was carried out in one instance only during the twelve months under review.

The previous splendid standard of health has been well maintained during the year, a fact which is readily confirmed by the figures from the daily sick muster, which read: Daily average of males sick, 6.304; females, 0.167.

With a daily average of 387 prisoners in custody, and the reception of 1,259 individuals during the twelve months, the low rate of sickness clearly demonstrates the attention which is given to the all-important matter of the prisoners' health during confinement. Quite a number of individuals are in a frail state of health on admission, and in many instances require extended medical treatment to restore them to a proper state of fitness. Allowing further for the number of minor injuries sustained on the works, the low daily average on the sick muster leaves no doubt that the general health of the inmates has been excellent. May I again express my appreciation of the co-operation of the Medical Superintendent of the Auckland Mental Hospital in the matter of expeditiously dealing with mental defectives.

The prison school is held on three nights weekly and continues to be directed by Mr. L. Grice, M.A. The annual examination results as already submitted to you, were again very pleasing, and showed the marked progress made by the majority of the prisoners in attendance, as the result of the tuition afforded them. The percentage of prisoners finding progress difficult was again very small, and the Schoolmaster commented upon the fact that the men concerned had showed very commendable interest and application in the endeavour to improve a somewhat limited knowledge.

Breaches of the regulations numbering one hundred and fifty 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 concerned 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 387 it will be admitted that the conduct of the inmates has, on the whole, been of a very satisfactory standard.

Evening drill has been continued three nights weekly under the instruction of a prison officer, the prisoners participating in the exercises benefiting considerably therefrom, particularly as they are employed indoors daily.

The whole of the requisite maintenance of the prison buildings has been effected during the year with prison labour, a good deal of the work being executed around the prison proper, whilst the upkeep of the prison officers' cottages has received adequate attention.

The prison garden continues to be a valuable asset, the whole of the institutional requirements of vegetables, with the exception of potatoes, being supplied from our own garden area.

Bootmaking has continued to furnish a very satisfactory return, and the orders placed by other Departments, as well as our own departmental requirements, have been ably and expeditiously handled throughout the year.

The output from the tailoring shop has been well maintained, and, in addition to our own requirements, those of other Departments have been readily met, and the returns have been well up to the standard of previous years.

Mail-bag repairing is carried on in conjunction with the tailoring, and, as in past years, the whole of the annual demands of the Post and Telegraph Department have been expeditiously handled.

With the exception of blankets, the whole of the prison laundering and the repairs to socks, continues to be executed by female labour, and the small cost to the Department is a pleasing reflection upon the administration of this division. Soft laundering has also been performed as required for the Police, Public Trust, Internal Affairs, and Defence Departments during the year.