

PRISONERS' FOOD.

To keep up with the modern trend of thought and practice in the matter of the reformation of offenders, the value of accommodation and food of inmates of all classes receives constant consideration, and from time to time different improvements have been introduced. Care is exercised to avoid anything in the nature of pampering, but it is recognized that proper feeding makes for contentment, and experience shows that contented prisoners are more amenable to socializing influences and are more effective as industrial units than those with either real or imaginary grievances that may be traceable to alimentary imbalance.

Ten years ago the food provided was noteworthy for its bulk and plainness, and although adequate to maintain and even improve the general standard of health, it nevertheless lacked those palatable essentials to ensure its full assimilation and value dietetically. To a great extent it depended on the ingenuity of the prison cooks and bakers to provide the best possible meals from what was issued, and this no doubt has always accounted from the inmates' point of view for the prison cooks and bakers being the most vital units of the institution. Some five or six years ago, however, an innovation was made in providing on a uniform basis an issue of regular puddings as an extra to the menu, and at the same time cooks were encouraged by issue of extra flour to provide pastries, small-goods, gravies, &c., and generally to serve all cooked foods in as great a variety of palatable forms as possible. This plan has been remarkably successful, and, with a liberal supply of vegetables provided, inmates' complaints of food are few. In cases of long-sentence prisoners provision is also made for a regularly recurring issue of extra food for short periods. About two years ago a further innovation was introduced by providing cocoa for one meal daily and also providing a reasonably liberal issue of milk, which is now $\frac{1}{4}$ pint (5 oz.) daily, in lieu of the previous issue of $\frac{1}{8}$ oz. Arrangements have been made, as mentioned earlier in the report, to extend the butter ration previously issued to females, as from 1st April, 1937, to all male inmates serving sentences of three months or over.

To ensure that the foods issued are served in reasonable variety the Department now requires all controlling officers to furnish regularly to headquarters details of the actual menus provided during the month. It can be said without fear of sound contradiction that the existing dietary scale, and the menus provided from it, constitute a very fair standard compared with what is enjoyed by the average free citizen of the Dominion.

INSTITUTIONAL ACTIVITIES.

Mount Eden Prison.—To Mount Eden are drafted all long-sentence prisoners and others who cannot with safety or convenience be transferred to the farms and camps.

The main industrial activities carried on for vocational purposes, as well as with a view to economy and profit, are tailoring, boot-manufacturing and repairing, tobacco-making, gardening, quarrying, and breadmaking.

A new oil-burning range and a freezer have been installed in the kitchen. The former will be more convenient and economical, and the freezer is part of the equipment incidental to the utilization of farm-grown meat and milk from Waikeria Borstal farm, in conformity with the policy of making the Department as far as practicable self-sustained.

The plant in the bootshop and tailoring shop has been modernized, and these industries now afford splendid facilities for vocational training. The Mount Eden factory provides opportunities for acquiring experience over a wider range than would be practicable in a large factory where operatives are confined almost exclusively to one machine.

A new tobacco-leaf-cutting machine has been procured. The leaf is grown at Waikeria, and the whole of the Department's requirements are now manufactured at Mount Eden. This has resulted in a considerable saving to the Public Account.

For cultural purposes and to prevent mental retrogression, lectures and entertainments are frequently held. The library has been added to, and magazines, periodicals, and weekly papers are admitted. Educational classes have been regularly conducted, the usual school curriculum being modified to meet the special conditions giving the classes a socializing bent, the methods adopted involving the use of films, records, and newspapers.

The work of the institution has been greatly assisted by a large body of voluntary workers, and in particular by the local Prisoners' Aid Society.

Camps.—At Hautu Development Farm, due to the lessened number of men suitable for transfer, one of the camps has had to be closed and work has been concentrated chiefly on maintenance, subdivision, and consolidation. There are now 4,372 acres cleared and under cultivation or in grass, and 1,759 partly cleared, and the farm is stocked with sheep and cattle, exceedingly good prices being secured during the year for wool and stock. The country is very light, and with the surrounding area being uncleared provides an harbourage for rabbits. The keeping of this pest in check presents a great difficulty.

At Rangipo the country shows better promise than at Hautu, the grasses holding better. At this farm cattle are the only stock carried. There are 3,177 acres cleared and in cultivation and 163 acres partly cleared. When the new road to Taumarunui is completed this will afford a much better railhead than National Park, where the climatic conditions are particularly severe on stock for market.

When the other local land-development schemes near to the above two farms have advanced sufficiently to justify the establishment of the necessary amenities, such as school, post-office, dairy factory, &c., it is hoped that considerable portions of these properties will be made available for settlement. The development-work has had a twofold advantage in that it provides healthful occupation for prisoners, and at the same time is converting waste land into productivity.