

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

AUCKLAND PRISON.

(Superintendent, Mr. W. T. LEGGETT.)

I have the honour to submit my annual report on the working of this institution for the year ending 31st December, 1936.

At the commencement of the year there were 266 males and 11 females in custody. During the year 1,004 males and 44 females were received, whilst 1,062 males and 47 females were discharged or otherwise disposed of, leaving in custody at the end of the year 208 males and 8 females. There was a small increase in receptions during the year, but a decided decrease in the number in custody here at the end of the year as against the previous year resultant of transferring all suitable prisoners to camps and farming institutions.

Generally the health of the prisoners has been very good, sickness being mostly confined to colds and minor ailments. Taking into account the number of derelict and physically unfit individuals received here, the daily average sick of 3.03 must be considered low, and reflects credit on the attention given by the Medical Officer, Dr. Tewsley. There was one death occurred in the institutional infirmary, being a Chinese, who was an opium addict and who succumbed to the effects of chronic opium poisoning shortly after admission.

It is pleasing to record no escapes during the year, but one individual twice unsuccessfully made attempts to escape by in one instance scaling the prison boundary wall and in a consequent fall received a severely sprained ankle, and on the other occasion this prisoner attempted to evade his escort whilst receiving out-patient attention at the public hospital for the result of his previous escapade.

The institutional school under direction of Mr. Dale, M.A., Dip.Ed.(N.Z.), Ph.D.(Yale), and assisted by a member of the prison staff, has made steady progress.

The drafting-out of many men to other centres means that only those with less ability or less able to make the most of opportunities for adjustment to a new point of view socially are left to attend school. As a consequence, the methods in use during the year have been changed considerably.

To meet the change in the constitution of the class, and with the co-operation of the Superintendent, I have utilized films, records, and the newspaper to a much greater extent than formerly. By such means it has been possible to develop a wider concept of geography, history, and social life in other lands, as well as stimulating thought along lines of New Zealand's relationship to other parts of the globe. Much fruitful discussion and written work has come out of these more modern methods, which have been made possible through the courtesy of Kodak, the Visual Education Association, and Strong and Co., who have loaned material.

In pursuance of a policy of transferring men, in their own interests, to camps and other centres the roll has fallen considerably. The school, however, is rather more involved for teaching purposes since many of the men require individual attention in both arithmetic and English.

On the whole the men appear to accept the opportunities the school offers with a purposeful attitude. The Maoris, many of whom did not reach a very high grade at school, work with a will and appear to have a desire to read with facility. Their work, in many cases, involves the simplest elements of reading and writing. I would submit that the school is doing valuable work in making it possible for these men to have a reading readiness so that they are less likely to find themselves in conflict with society because of their inability to interpret English with a certain degree of facility.

Some of the men have been encouraged to work along lines of interest to themselves. In this way they have branched out considerably beyond the usual elementary school requirements.

A first-aid class conducted by St. John Ambulance Association has been continued, and lectures were given by Dr. Neil McDougall, assisted by Ambulance Officer Mr. J. Cummings, and Captain Caswell, of the Church Army, and again keen interest was taken by the class and a number of creditable passes obtained.

The evening physical drill class, under direction of a member of the staff, has been continued twice weekly with beneficial results to some of the more youthful prisoners requiring physical development.

Monthly entertainments, mostly vocal and instrumental, have been given, and such were arranged by interested social workers and visiting clergymen. Several social organizations, individual social workers, local Returned Soldiers Association, and business firms have again provided additional comforts to the inmates during the festive season, and such was much appreciated by the inmates. The Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society, which has been under the direction of Captain Banyard and Captain Caswell, of the Church Army, during the year has given every assistance to deserving discharged prisoners, both by financial assistance and providing avenues towards employment, also Major Perry, of the Salvation Army Men's Industrial Home, who is a regular visitor to this institution, is ever ready to give assistance and provide accommodation for suitable cases, and really good work has been carried out by both organizations. The spiritual welfare of the prisoners has been well looked after by ministers of the various denominations, who conduct weekly services and give individual visits to those requiring their help.

During the year the prison library has received considerable attention, and all useful books have been thoroughly renovated and rebound and replacements made to bring the volumes in use up to 1,000.

The various institutional industrial activities have been actively carried on, and the bootmaking and tailoring workshops have fully supplied boots and clothing requirements to the various prison and mental hospital institutions.