

1909.
NEW ZEALAND.

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, PRISONS BRANCH

(REPORT ON). FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER, 1908;

ALSO

OPERATION OF "THE FIRST OFFENDERS' PROBATION ACT, 1908"

(REPORT ON), FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER, 1908.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

The INSPECTOR OF PRISONS to the Hon. the MINISTER OF JUSTICE.

SIR,—

Department of Justice, Prisons Branch, 31st March, 1909.

I have the honour to present this my twenty-eighth report on the prisons of the Dominion, together with the twenty-third annual report on the working of "The First Offenders' Probation Act, 1908," and as I am leaving the Department to-morrow, under the age-limit regulation, I am glad to be able to report that the prisons of the Dominion are being handed over in a satisfactory state of efficiency and discipline.

The usual system of periodically visiting the various prisons on the dates shown on the attached table marked I has been carefully carried out, and, though many of the visits were surprise ones, I have on all occasions found the various establishments in a satisfactory state, and a good system of discipline maintained without undue severity. Any complaints or requests made to me by either officers or prisoners have been fully inquired into, and adjusted as far as practicable. The sanitary arrangements at all the prisons are now properly attended to.

1. Extracts from the annual reports of Gaolers are, as usual, attached to this report, from which it will be seen that at Wellington more warders' cottages are required, also new prison buildings, workshops, shelter-sheds, and reconstruction of exercise-yards, while a recommendation is also made that a new prison for males be built in the country, surrounded by plenty of land, which would give employment to long-sentenced prisoners who are found unsuitable for transfers to tree-planting prisons. New Plymouth complains that supposed lunatics and delirium tremens cases are still sent to the gaol, and Invercargill points out that there all such cases are at once sent to the District Hospital: this is as it should be elsewhere. Auckland points out it is much to be regretted that five boys under fifteen years of age were committed to gaol during the year. It has been pointed out in former reports that prison is not the proper place for young people of tender years. Invercargill shows that the cultivation of vegetables there has been both successful and remunerative. The reports from the tree-planting prisons are very satisfactory, proving that real good work in clearing and planting is being carried out.

2. From particulars given in Table K it will be seen that the First Offenders' Probation Act continues to work quite as satisfactorily as heretofore, and the Probation Officers, though there is no remuneration given them, take every pains to ascertain the former history of the supposed first offenders, and furnish unbiassed reports.

3. The usual custom of calling for tenders for supplies to the town prisons has been adhered to, the tenders being submitted to the Visiting Justices, and their recommendations as to acceptances are invariably given effect to. Supplies for the tree-planting prisons are obtained locally, as, owing to their isolated positions, it is impossible to obtain tenders.

4. There were 12 escapes during the year, as against 13 in 1907—viz., 2 from Lyttelton (the same prisoner on two occasions), 1 from Wellington, 1 from Point Halswell, 3 from Waiotapu, 2 from Waipa, 1 from New Plymouth, 1 from the train on transfer from Waiotapu to Auckland, and 1 who disappeared from a steamer near Onehunga when on transfer from Wellington to Waiotapu. With the exception of one prisoner from Waiotapu and the one who disappeared from the steamer, all the escapees were recaptured and tried in open Court,