

As detailed elsewhere, considerable progress has been made in connection with the establishment of the roadmaking camp at Waimarino for habituals, for which preparations were being made when my last report was written. The employment of habitual criminals in the open under the ordinary prison-camp system is a distinct departure in prison administration, and marks a step forward in the treatment of this class of offender. Up to the present there has been no reason to regret making the experiment.

The progress on the Invercargill reclamation-works has been well maintained.

Another change that may certainly be included under the heading of this section is the provision of a temporary prison at the Mount Cook brickworks, and the consequent cessation of the daily march of a large gang of prisoners through some of the busiest streets of Wellington. This practice has been going on for fully thirty years, and was not only a constant source of trouble, but was a bugbear to the public, the officials, and the prisoners.

The transfer of forty-one prisoners from the Terrace Prison to Mount Cook also had the effect of preventing the overcrowding that had been the constantly recurring trouble there for a considerable time. Still further relief has recently been given by the building of a further temporary building at Point Halswell in connection with the improvements that are to be made on that site.

In regard to future prospects, if operations are not restricted owing to the present world crisis, the next two years should see a distinct advance in the various works, and a nearer approach to the realization of the policy now being carried out. By that time Waikeria should be capable of accommodating such a number of prisoners that the North Island prisons will be appreciably relieved, Point Halswell and Paparua Prisons should be well advanced, and the Invercargill buildings and walls completed. The drainage and general preparation of the 650 acres now owned by the Department at Invercargill should also be well under way.

The present works should provide ample employment for some time to come, but the future interests of the Department would be considered if a further block of land could be acquired, preferably in the North Island, for our purposes. Any extension of the principle of prison farms should, however, be carried out in such a way that the land dealt with could be afterwards utilized for general settlement purposes. This would merely entail the provision of temporary buildings which could be easily transferred to other areas.

TREE-PLANTING.

Tree-planting operations have been continued during the year at the northern camps—Kaingaroa and Waipa. The Miramar Peninsula (Wellington), in the vicinity of Point Halswell, was planted last year by the Minister's direction, and it will not be long before the young trees make sufficient growth to be observed from the waterfront.

It is now about fourteen years since the first tree-planting prison camp was established, and the subjoined table, for which the figures have been supplied by the Forestry Department, illustrates clearly the amount of work that has been done from the commencement until March last, and also the labour-value of the work calculated according to free-labour standards.

| Area planted by Prison Labour from 1901 to March, 1915. | Number of Trees planted. | Labour-value of Prisoners' Work. | Average Number of Prisoners employed. |
|---|--------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 9,776 acres | 31,000,000 | £51,000 | 51 |

EMPLOYMENT OF PRISONERS.

At no time in the history of the Department of Prisons has there been so much activity in the prosecution of important undertakings as has been the case during the past year. Every able-bodied prisoner has been employed at work which is either directly remunerative or has led to a large saving of public expenditure. The provision of the necessary buildings for the housing of prisoners who are to carry on the work of developing the properties acquired by the Department for agricultural purposes, in accordance with its declared policy, has absorbed a considerable amount of labour; while farming operations at Waikeria and Paparua have also been carried on. The ordinary prison industries have continued to employ a number of prisoners, some of whom are unsuitable for other work.

Owing to the number and variety of the works we had in hand it became necessary during the year to provide for more adequate supervision than had been necessary under former conditions. A Works Supervisor in the person of Mr. M. Hawkins, then Gaoler at Invercargill, was accordingly appointed, and I am glad to say that the creation of this office has been justified by results.

WORKS AND INDUSTRIES.

Auckland.—The building in stone of the south-wing extension has been continued, and substantial progress has been made. The new cells, hospital, store, officers' quarters, and schoolroom which are being provided in this wing should be in full occupation before the next report is written. The value of the work performed by prisoners on this building during the year, exclusive of the cost of material, is estimated at £2,879. This represents a substantial saving to the taxpayers of the Dominion.

The stone-quarry at Auckland has provided employment for a number of men. In addition to quarrying the whole of the stone required for the building, a substantial quantity of road-metal has been sold to the public, the cash received from this source alone amounting to £1,404. The quarry-output could be much increased if a modern plant and general equipment were installed, but the time is not opportune for asking for the expenditure that would be necessary to provide what is required.