

SESSION II.
1923.
NEW ZEALAND.

PRISONS

(REPORT ON) FOR THE YEAR 1922-23.

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

The Hon. the MINISTER IN CHARGE OF THE PRISONS DEPARTMENT to His Excellency the GOVERNOR-GENERAL.

MY LORD,—

Wellington, 31st July, 1923.

I have the honour to submit to Your Excellency the report of the Prisons Department for the year 1922-23.

I have, &c.,

C. J. PARR,

Minister in Charge of Prisons Department.

The CONTROLLER-GENERAL OF PRISONS to the Hon. the MINISTER IN CHARGE OF PRISONS DEPARTMENT.

SIR,—

Prisons Department, Wellington, 28th July, 1923.

I have the honour to present the forty-second annual report of the Prisons Department, covering the financial year 1922-23, together with the report of the Inspector of Prisons, an epitome of the reports of the controlling officers of the different prisons and prisons institutions, and the criminal statistics for the calendar year ended 31st December, 1922.

PRISON POPULATION: COMPARATIVE FIGURES.

The criminal statistics for the past calendar year (1922) show that a total of 4,569 distinct persons were received into the various prisons and prison institutions, as compared with 4,995 during the previous year—a decrease of 8·5 per cent.; but the daily average number in custody increased from 1,065·60 in 1921 to 1,113·45 in 1922—an increase of 4·4 per cent. The decrease in receptions and the increase in the daily average would appear to be anomalous, but this is accounted for by the fact that during the past year the number of long-sentenced prisoners received shows a pronounced increase, whilst there is a corresponding decrease in the number of persons received for short terms. In comparing the sentences imposed in 1922 with those of the previous year it is found that there is an increase of fully 100 per cent. in the number of persons declared habitual criminals. The number sentenced to reformatory detention increased by 44·2 per cent., but hard-labour sentences show a slight decrease. Youthful offenders continue to increase. A total of 340 New-Zealand-born prisoners between the ages of fifteen and twenty-five were received during 1922—an increase of 126, or 58 per cent., on the figures for 1921. Crime among youthful Maoris appears to be on the increase. Twenty-nine Maoris under the age of twenty years were received during the past year, as against ten during 1921.

The general increase in the prison population is, no doubt, symptomatic of the times, but when it is realized that the bulk of that increase during the past two years has been in the more juvenile class of offenders only, the position that has arisen is regrettable to the last degree. It is time indeed that this phase of criminality received some definite study on the part of some person, or set of persons, specially suited and specially employed for this important class of research work. It is a question of cause and effect. Until the origin of a disease is discovered it is impossible to apply an effective remedy. In some of the States of America there are Social-welfare Departments with properly qualified staffs to deal with every phase of social-reform work. While New Zealand is not yet sufficiently populous to warrant heavy expenditure in this direction, there