

is ample room for a co-ordination of effort. A properly organized Social-welfare Department, combining the activities of some half-dozen Departments and private organizations that are now dealing with various phases of the subject, would not necessarily lead to much additional expenditure, but if such a Department were established under efficient leadership there would be little difficulty in providing a special research branch to investigate the root causes of crime and poverty, and to provide formulæ at least for amelioration. At present there is no authority to whom members of the public may appeal when matters affecting the social welfare of the community come under their notice. It is "nobody's business," least of all the business of the Prisons Department; but with such evidence before us of the result of the general neglect of the primary principles of social reform we feel that it is at least our "business" to draw public attention to the matter. In this connection I feel impelled to repeat the concluding paragraph of my last year's remarks regarding the criminal statistics: "In crime, as in disease, 'prevention is better than cure.' Preventive measures must naturally be applied before the disease has developed. In crime, as in disease, the application of a cure is a doubtful, difficult, and lengthy process. The percentage of complete recoveries in the case of confirmed criminals is probably as small as in the case of sufferers from malignant disease who have received no medical attention until the disease has become well established."

The fluctuations in the prison population of the Dominion from 1881 to 1922 (inclusive) are shown in the table below:—

Daily Average, 1881 to 1922.

Year.	Daily Average of Prisoners in Dominion Prisons.			Year.	Daily Average of Prisoners in Dominion Prisons.		
	Males.	Females.	Totals.		Males.	Females.	Totals.
1881 ..	631·66	94·37	726·03	1916 ..	859·99	82·78	942·77
1891 ..	459·22	58·39	517·61	1917 ..	817·27	96·99	914·26
1911 ..	799·08	64·18	863·26	1918 ..	896·98	84·97	981·95
1912 ..	855·28	64·07	919·35	1919 ..	936·28	68·06	1,004·34
1913 ..	826·69	66·55	893·24	1920 ..	872·59	67·10	939·69
1914 ..	916·09	63·72	979·81	1921 ..	992·04	73·56	1,065·60
1915 ..	931·33	76·79	1,008·12	1922 ..	1,052·54	60·91	1,113·45

EXPENDITURE AND RECEIPTS.

The gross expenditure of the Department under all heads for the past financial year was £123,360, compared with £129,411 for the previous year. The cash receipts and cash credits amounted to £46,060, and if to this is added the sum of £901 obtained from rents of buildings and sale of motor-cars—which is credited by Treasury to "miscellaneous revenue"—the gross revenue amounted to £46,961. The net expenditure for the financial year amounted to £77,300, which is £2,245 less than that of the previous year. The reduction in annual expenditure would have been greater but for the increase in the prison population. The higher daily average number in custody proportionately increased the expenditure on clothing, rations, industry, earnings, and other items to the extent of approximately £3,300. It will accordingly be seen by comparing the actual net expenditure per prisoner with that of the previous financial year that if the prison population had remained stationary there would have been a total reduction of £5,545.

Average Cost per Head of Prisoners' Rations from 1909 to the 31st March, 1923.

Year.	Total Expenditure on Rations.	Number of Prisoners.	Cost per Head.	Year.	Total Expenditure on Rations.	Number of Prisoners.	Cost per Head.
	£		£		£		£
1909 ..	8,544	809·84	10·55	1916-17 ..	15,092	920·15	16·41
1910 ..	9,322	901·73	10·33	1917-18 ..	15,522	941·11	16·64
1911 ..	8,494	863·26	9·83	1918-19 ..	16,473	1,003·43	16·41
1912 ..	9,405	919·35	10·23	1919-20 ..	17,294	965·07	17·93
1913 ..	9,754	893·24	10·91	1920-21 ..	18,766	965·03	19·44
1914 ..	11,555	979·81	11·79	1921-22 ..	17,962	1,075·34	16·70
1915 ..	15,099	1,008·12	14·97	1922-23 ..	16,803	1,103·95	15·22

Receipts.

Early in the financial year it was decided to discontinue making any claim upon the Public Works Fund in respect of prison labour (skilled and unskilled) employed in constructing departmental buildings. This change in policy—although causing a considerable loss in revenue—helped to make available more funds for the continuation of our building programme. It is satisfactory to note that if the value of prison labour on buildings had been collected as in former years the gross departmental revenue would be considerably in excess of last year's figures. There has been a further substantial increase