

It is interesting to note the wide variation in value, ranging from £13 per head in the minor gaols up to £104 per head at Waikune Prison. The exceptionally low value in the former case is due to the fact that minor gaols accommodate remand prisoners up to one week only, and as most of such gaols are police institutions in which there may be no prison occupants for months at a time there is usually little or no employment given to an inmate. On the other hand, Waikune Prison Camp accommodates the superior adult male prisoner whose labour is classed for nearly all inmates at the maximum rates of labour-value. Again, Wanganui's valuation of £32 per head is due to its being a prison confined to the accommodation of elderly male prisoners.

PAYMENTS TO DEPENDANTS.

The question of crediting prisoners with wages for the maintenance of dependants has a definite relation to that of the profitable utilization of prison labour. At present the total credits resulting from the use of prison labour cover only half the cost to the taxpayer for prison maintenance, consequently any payments made for extraneous purposes mean an added burden to the taxpayer.

It is now fairly generally recognized that, in addition to the unfortunate fact that the shame and stigma attaching to the imprisonment of an offender is also largely visited unto the children, it is usually the family and dependants of the prisoner who suffer most as regards actual deprivation of physical needs and bodily comforts.

Some years ago a scheme was inaugurated whereby weekly grants were made to dependants after the prisoner had served three months with exemplary conduct and industry. During the past year just under £8,000 was paid out from the Consolidated Fund to dependants under this arrangement.

Cases come under notice from time to time where dependants have been reduced almost to mendicancy through lack of means of subsistence during the first three months, and it would appear that where the Department can usefully employ the prisoner there is an obligation on humanitarian grounds, in necessitous cases, to contribute towards the support of dependants. It must be borne in mind that it is difficult to find profitable employment for short-sentence men, as on account of the practice of restoring all prisoners to the place of commitment the shortness of the term does not justify the cost of transport to places where they can be profitably employed.

Critics of the use of prison labour in competition with free labour should bear in mind that each prisoner is a unit withdrawn from the ranks of free labour, and the Department in using these merely acts as a mobilizing agency in an endeavour to effectively utilize what would otherwise be numerous non-effective scattered units. The right to sell the product of prison labour is a natural sequence of the payment of wages to dependants.

CLASSIFICATION OF PRISONERS.

Sir Ruggles-Brise, an eminent English authority, has stated that "It has become more and more recognized in recent years that the personality of the offender must enter into the legal conception of the degree of guilt." Dealing with this matter, the suggestion has frequently been made that a psychiatrist should be associated with the Courts administering criminal justice, but this would involve many practical administrative difficulties. The Courts in New Zealand are scrupulously careful in giving due attention to any allegation of impaired responsibility arising from mental defect, and it is by no means infrequent for the machinery of the Mental Defectives Act, 1911, to be invoked to enable an offender to be placed under special observation. There are, however, many offenders who cannot be certified as insane, but whose mentality is such that their power of inhibition is below normal. These are included in the group of recidivists already referred to. It is desirable that some means should be devised whereby the uncertifiable weak-minded can be located in a separate institution, as these cases are entirely unsuited to the discipline and organization of the ordinary prison.

In dealing with the separation of the normal from the subnormal the Medical Officer of the Brixton Prison recently stated that "these border-line cases are most unsatisfactory. One feels that the short terms of imprisonment which are all that most of them receive do little good to the prisoners and provide very short respite to the public. This is so particularly in cases of sexual perverts, many of whom are slightly defective. It is certain that punishment, as a rule, is impotent to deter them. They apparently cannot resist their disordered impulses, and so far are to be pitied, but they constitute a nuisance and a danger from which the public ought to be protected. Sooner or later the question of their permanent segregation will have to be faced."

Apart from the question of the separate treatment of the mentally abnormal the actual classification of the more normal prisoners within the prison is a matter of considerable importance. It is recognized that the classification of prisoners should be based on a personal study of the offender according to age and character irrespective of the nature of the offence. In England and America classification is based largely on mental tests. Experience has shown that many evil consequences follow the herding-together of offenders regardless of age, antecedents, and habits.

In New Zealand the classification of prisoners is based principally on age and the extent of criminal experience. The youthful offenders in the incipient stage of delinquency are transferred to the Borstal institutions, and are thus kept apart from the contaminating influences of association with older criminals. The sexual perverts are segregated at New Plymouth, but little further attempt at classification is made, except with the more desperate criminals, who are detained at Mount Eden, where there is a greater degree of security from escape. There is still room for further classification, as at present in many prisons habitual criminals are associated in the same prison with first offenders who are too old for admission to Borstal institutions. Many of this latter class are what may be termed "accidental criminals," and it would lessen the possibility of the corrupting influence of this