

Many prisoners also, by physique or their mental or moral outlook, are quite unsuitable for farm-work. Many are short-sentence men whom it would be relatively costly and uneconomical to transfer for short periods to prison farms. It is because of these difficulties the Department is often obliged to embark, to a limited extent, on competitive enterprises, although every effort is made in accordance with the expressed Government policy for many years to avoid State competitive friction as far as possible.

It should be borne in mind that the Prisons Department is in a somewhat unique position. It would be distinctly uneconomical for the Department not to utilize its labour force to the best advantage for the purpose of keeping down the burden on the taxpayer for the upkeep of prisoners. It would also be a definitely retrogressive step were the Department to withdraw prison labour from the existing avenues of employment, for to do this would, apart from all other considerations, eventually lead to the condition of affairs similar to that existing a few decades ago, when a prisoner released was essentially a more potent law-breaker than on his committal.

Dealing with the part played by the individual institutions in the industries and agricultural programme of the Department, the following briefly outlines nature of activities at each.

At Auckland Prison the work is almost wholly industrial, except for the garden. Quarrying, bootmaking, tinsmithing, clothing-manufacture, and laundering for Defence Department, are the main occupations, the quarry absorbing the greatest number of inmates.

At the Addington Women's Reformatory a few inmates are employed in cottage gardening, and a number in laundry-work for other Departments. This continues to be a profitable venture, and substantially assists in reducing the cost of maintaining the institution.

At Hautu and Rangipo, near Tokaanu, the scheme of developing an area of 13,500 acres of pumice land continues to be actively pursued, with gratifying results. Slightly over 3,000 acres of what was hitherto absolutely waste country have been cleared, and the total area in grass at the 31st March, 1930, was as follows:—

		Hautu. Acres.	Rangipo. Acres.	Total. Acres.
Temporary pastures	.. .. .	1,100	1,250	2,350
Permanent pastures	.. .. .	560	50	610
		<hr/> 1,660	<hr/> 1,300	<hr/> 2,960

A recent geological survey of the district and an analysis of soils by officers of the Scientific and Industrial Research Department justifies this Department's optimism as to eventual success, as these reveal that the peculiar fertility and freedom from bush sickness of the Hautu area is due to a volcanic deposit of andesite ash which shows high iron, lime, and magnesia content. Coupled with an adequate rainfall in almost all months of the year, the growth is such that, notwithstanding the severe winters, stock can be successfully carried throughout the year. Owing to the necessity for providing hay, ensilage, and root crops for winter feed, slightly larger areas than were originally contemplated will be required when the land is ultimately subdivided for settlement.

At Invercargill a number of inmates are engaged in bootmaking for the footwear requirements of the South Island institutions, and in carrying out certain building extensions, but most of the labour is engaged in reclaiming and draining the farm and carrying on farming operations on the reclaimed areas. Reclamation has been proceeding for a considerable number of years with an expenditure of a vast amount of human energy and not a little cash. On the whole the results are disappointing, and the farm is, more or less, dependent on some drier leased areas for wintering of stock. It is doubtful if the reclaimed area will ever prove an asset in any way compatible with the work and money put into it. However, the money still required to complete the original proposals is now small; most of the work in future will involve only inmates' labour. Having done so much work in attempting to create a farm, if only as a means of salvage, the Department should continue to occupy and work it for the most that can be obtained from it.

At Napier Prison the main outlet for the labour available is the gravel-pit. There is so little demand for metal that all requirements can be met without the aid of machinery. As with most of the institutions, sufficient vegetables, except potatoes, are grown for institution requirements. At New Plymouth the position is similar to Napier in respect of occupation and industries.

Paparua Prison a few years ago was wholly a farm institution occupying 1,350 acres. Since development was completed it has been necessary to find alternative employment for from thirty to forty prisoners, and this has been met by developing a gravel-pit, which has proved a most profitable industry. On the farm itself the work is varied. Sheep-raising, pig-rearing, poultry, and growing grain, fodder and vegetables, are all carried on.

At Point Halswell, Wellington, dairying previously was carried on, but this has been transferred to Wellington Prison, where this work can be more satisfactorily undertaken. Laundering and mending for a number of Departments and cottage gardening are the main occupations, and continue to be profitable.

At Waikeria in the Waikato District operations are at present confined principally to dairying, but within the next few seasons a considerable additional value will be coming off in wool, sheep, and beef. Since a portion of the Mental Hospital estate was taken over a few years ago, the Department has been stocking up gradually in cattle and sheep as the paddocks are being brought into cultivation. The dairy production of three dairies continues to increase year by year. For the year ended 31st March, the total production was substantially higher than the year preceding, but in value was approximately the same due to the collapse of the market. The average butterfat for 1928-29 season, while not quite as high as the best season (1927-28), was particularly good, and continues to be well above the average of the registered herds in the district.