

The daily average number in custody was 1,466, or twenty-eight in excess of the previous year. The number of distinct persons involved and classified under three main heads, according to the nature of the offence, is shown in the following comparative table:—

Year.	Offences against Person.	Offences against Property.	Miscellaneous Offences.	Total Distinct Persons.	Ratio to 10,000 of Population.
1925	173	721	1,996	2,890	20·88
1926	217	836	1,702	2,755	19·49
1927	192	937	1,582	2,711	18·84
1928	165	877	1,506	2,548	17·37
1929	196	854	1,546	2,596	17·62
1930	194	968	1,702	2,864	19·19

It will be seen from the foregoing table that the increase has been most pronounced in offences against property. The offences against the person were actually less than the last year. The total number of distinct persons shows an increase of 268, of which thirty-nine were women.

Over one-third of the total received into custody during the year were for terms of less than one month; more than half the total were for less than three months, and just on three-quarters of the total admissions were for under six months. The extent of serious crime in the Dominion may be gauged from the fact that of the total 2,864 distinct persons sentenced to imprisonment during the year only 574 received sentences for twelve months and over, and this number includes twenty-two who were declared habitual criminals.

As mentioned in previous reports, in view of the authoritative opinion as to the futility for reformatory purposes of short sentences, the desirability of applying some alternative method of treatment, such as probation or the imposition of a fine might, with advantage, be considered. Where the ends of justice cannot be adequately met by such means a more salutary term of reformatory detention should be inflicted in preference to imposing sentences which are too short for the application of any practical scheme of training or discipline; but which, nevertheless, habituate offenders to the conditions and atmosphere of a prison and lessens its deterrent influence.

The petty recidivists who constitute the larger proportion of the total receptions always present a problem both to the Courts and to the penal authorities. The unlikelihood of prison either deterring or reforming a person who has a record of a score or more previous convictions is fairly obvious, and for the protection of society the only effective remedy appears to be for Magistrates to have recourse to the statutory provisions for declaring recurring petty offenders "habitual offenders," and thus place them indefinitely out of mischief. Where a man repeatedly relapses into crime there can be no logical reason for releasing him from safe keeping until society can be assured of its security from his menace.

It is interesting to observe a recent pronouncement of the Court of Appeal on a point of almost international interest judicially and criminologically—*i.e.*, the question of the propriety of taking previous convictions into account when the Court is passing sentence. It was laid down as a principle that for the substantive offence with which a person is charged the sentence ought to bear some relation to the intrinsic gravity of the crime, notwithstanding the fact that the offender may previously have committed other and more serious crimes; but where a prisoner's previous convictions indicate a predilection to commit the particular type of offence of which he is convicted it is the duty of the Court, for the protection of the public, to take them into consideration and lengthen the period of confinement accordingly. The previous convictions may also be looked at for the purposes of establishing the prisoner's character and assisting to determine the punishment that is appropriate to the case of a man of that character for the particular offence for which he is to be sentenced. The Court of Appeal is of opinion that, where by reason of a man's character as evidenced wholly or partly by his previous convictions, it is thought the punishment should be increased, the better course is to add a term of reformatory detention rather than lengthen the term of hard labour imposed for the substantive offence.

A prisoner undergoing a sentence of reformatory detention may have his case reviewed by the Prisons Board at any time, and his release is contingent largely on his own conduct and whether the circumstances warrant such course, whereas hard-labour cases are reviewed only after the expiry of half the total term imposed. Such sentences are regarded as more punitive and definite in character.

One execution was carried out at Mount Eden Prison. No prisoners were flogged during the year; seven prisoners died whilst under treatment at the public hospitals, one of these deaths being a case of suicide, and six were due to natural causes. Twenty-two prisoners were transferred to mental hospitals for observation, or upon certification as being mentally defective. All the prisoners who escaped from custody during the year were recaptured.

BORSTAL INSTITUTIONS.

The foregoing prison statistics include commitments to the Borstal institutions, which are three in number, the Invercargill Borstal being for lads under twenty-one, the Waikeria Borstal for young men committed under twenty-five years of age, and the institution at Point Halswell for young women. During the year under review 136 lads and twenty-eight girls, a total of 164, were committed by the Courts, and fourteen youths and two girls were transferred to Borstals from industrial schools and penal establishments for the purpose of training and discipline.