

1934.
NEW ZEALAND.

PRISONS DEPARTMENT

(REPORT ON) FOR THE YEAR 1933-34.

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.

Wellington, 30th August, 1934.

I HAVE the honour to submit to Your Excellency the report of the Prisons Department for the year 1933-34.

I have, &c.,

JOHN S. COBBE,

Minister in Charge of Prisons Department.

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

SIR,—

I have the honour to present the annual report of the Prisons Department for the financial year ended the 31st March, 1934, together with extracts from the reports of Controlling Officers, and the criminal statistics for the calendar year ended 31st December, 1933. The institutional reports have been abridged on account of the need for economy.

PRISON STATISTICS.

The statistical tables appended to this report show that at the beginning of the year there were 1,583 persons in custody. The "receptions" during the year 1933 totalled 4,157, as against 5,198 in 1932—a decrease of 1,041, or just over 20 per cent.—and at the end of the year there remained in detention 1,442 prisoners.

As was pointed out in last year's report, the number of commitments that year was abnormally high, because of the relatively large number of persons (102) who were involved in the riotous disturbances which took place in 1932, but even if this inflation is allowed for, the decline in 1933 in the total number sentenced to imprisonment is most marked, and it is pleasing to observe that the totals are now back to those of the pre-depression period.

The position is all the more satisfactory when it is borne in mind that in all countries authorities recognize that during time of industrial depression the tendency is for crime and prison populations to increase. The latest reports from England and Australia bear evidence of this.

There is no doubt that the drafting of young men to unemployment relief camps has been a contributory factor in so far as the falling-off in commitments to prison is concerned. Several Controlling Officers and Probation Officers have commented on the fact that the unemployed schemes have been a boon, in that the removal of a large number of men from the temptations that inevitably follow in the wake of idleness in the towns has deflected many from drifting into some form of criminal pursuit.

In another way also the unemployment authorities have relieved the burden of crime in that the agencies of the Board have co-operated with Probation Officers and have enabled men released from prison to be placed in work, thereby saving a relapse, which so often follows where a man discharged from prison has no job to go to. The Prisoners' Aid Societies and Probation Committees have also helped in this connection.