

The number of distinct persons dealt with was 2,376, or 355 less than during 1933. The downward trend is even more pronounced than these figures show by reason of the fact that included in the total receptions for 1934 are 70 seamen who were involved in the West Coast shipping strike and were received at Paparua Prison one evening and discharged on the recommendation of the Magistrate the next morning.

Nature of Offences.

Hereunder is set out a comparative table showing for several years past the number of offences classified under three main headings—offences against the person, offences against property, and miscellaneous offences (*i.e.*, drunkenness, vagrancy, &c.). It will be observed that the total number of distinct offenders handled during 1934 was 26 per cent. less than in 1931. For convenience of reference the ratio to each 10,000 of the general population is also included in the table.

Year.			Offences against the Person.	Offences against Property.	Miscellaneous Offences.	Total Prisoners received.	Ratio to 10,000 of Population.
1934	..	..	155	889	1,332	2,376	15·33
1933	..	..	196	1,048	1,487	2,731	17·75
1932	..	..	194	1,313	1,893	3,401	22·29
1931	..	..	216	1,155	1,832	3,203	21·29

It is satisfactory to note the falling off in the number of offences against the person and against property. This is not the present experience of some of the older countries overseas.

The ratio of 15·33 per 10,000 of the general population is the lowest for a great many years, and for purposes of comparison, and as an indication of the downward movement of crime in New Zealand in recent years, the figures at the end of each of the last four decades are shown hereunder :—

Year.			Ratio of Prisoners received to 10,000 of General Population.	Year.			Ratio of Prisoners received to 10,000 of General Population.
1890	..	..	38·61	1914	..	..	31·05
1894	..	..	29·78	1924	..	..	17·78
1904	..	..	34·27	1934	..	..	15·33

Some critics have asserted from time to time that, in relation to the general population of the two countries, the Dominion has a prison population three or four times in excess of that of England. It is difficult to make comparisons for the reason, as has been pointed out in earlier reports, certain classes of offenders are included in the New Zealand prison statistics who are not so dealt with in England. The latest published English statistics show the ratio of prisoners as 12·1 to 10,000 of the general population, so that it will be seen that the disparity, if any, is not very wide.

Nationality of Prisoners.

An analysis of the receptions on a nationality basis shows a diminution of 188 in the number of New-Zealand-born (pakeha) prisoners, and a drop of 42 in respect of Maori prisoners. It is satisfactory to note that the relatively large increase in the number of Maoris committed to prison in 1932 has not been sustained. The following is a summary for the past five years :—

Year.			New-Zealand- born (excluding Maoris).	Maoris.	British and Foreign.	Total.
1934	..	..	1,416	211	749	2,376
1933	..	..	1,604	253	874	2,731
1932	..	..	1,941	316	1,144	3,401
1931	..	..	1,779	271	1,153	3,203
1930	..	..	1,576	184	1,104	2,864

Ages of Prisoners.

In last year's report attention was drawn to the falling off in the amount of crime by young offenders. This condition of affairs has been maintained, as is indicated by the following table :—

Age Group.			1930.	1931.	1932.	1933.	1934.
Under 20	..	..	164	203	222	175	120
20-25	..	..	429	555	559	459	391
25-30	..	..	426	488	504	403	343
30-40	..	..	716	822	903	747	640
40 and upwards	..	..	1,118	1,129	1,207	937	878
Not stated	..	..	11	6	6	10	4
Totals	..	..	2,864	3,203	3,401	2,731	2,376