

1928.
NEW ZEALAND.

PRISONS DEPARTMENT

(REPORT ON) FOR THE YEAR 1927-28.

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, 14th August, 1928.

I HAVE the honour to submit to Your Excellency the report of the Prisons Department for the year 1927-28.

I have, &c.,
F. J. ROLLESTON,
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 covering the financial year ended 31st March, 1928, together with the Inspector's report and extracts from the reports of controlling officers of the different institutions, and the criminal statistics for the calendar year ended 31st December, 1927.

PRISON POPULATION : COMPARATIVE FIGURES.—STATISTICS.

The tables of criminal statistics which are published as an appendix to this report show that there were 4,664 committals to the various prisons and institutions under the control of the Department during the year ended 31st December, 1927, as compared with 4,600 for the previous year. Although there has thus been a slight increase in the number of receptions, it is satisfactory to note that there has been a small decrease in the number of distinct persons received into the Department's care as compared with the last two years, the numbers respectively being as follows :—

Year.	Prisoners received.	Proportion per 10,000 of Mean Population.
1925	2,890	20.88
1926	2,755	19.49
1927	2,711	18.84

Although these figures are reassuring, in so far as they show that the number of our criminal population is not on the increase, it is to be noted that the ratio of prisoners to the general population is still higher than it was prior to the setting-in of the period of industrial depression following the artificial economic stimulus which took place during the immediate post-war years. The correlation between adverse economic conditions and crime, particularly with reference to offences against property, is most marked, and it is widely recognized that the total volume of crime is greater during a period of economic depression. In this respect there is no doubt that unemployment was a contributing factor, as it is generally agreed that steady work makes for morals. That great penal philosopher, Gabriel Tarde, aptly stated, "Work is in itself the enemy of crime."

A study of the figures dealing with offenders classed under age-groups shows that there has been an increase in the number of distinct offenders committed under twenty years of age—225, as compared with 219 for the previous year. The majority of these committals have been for offences against property, 130 being for theft and deceit. Of these young offenders, it is to be noted that 199 were New-Zealand-born.