

good order, but as a large number of the offences under this group—*e.g.*, “Breaches of Lights on Vehicles Act,” or “Offences relating to registration of motors”—may be termed *mala prohibita*, as distinct from *mala in se*, they do not necessarily connote a weakening of our moral standards, although, of course, it is generally agreed that what is condemned by law should be regarded as morally wrong. As against this position, however, a disquieting feature of the table is the steadily growing increase in the number of offences against property.

BORSTAL INSTITUTIONS.

There are three Borstal institutions in the Dominion—one for lads between the ages of twenty and twenty-five, at Waikeria; one for youths between the ages of fifteen and twenty, at Invercargill; and an institution for young women from fifteen to twenty-five, at Point Halswell.

Borstal institutions are constituted under the Prevention of Crime Act, 1924, and are defined in the statute as follows: “A place in which young offenders whilst detained can be given such occupational training and other instruction, and be subject to such disciplinary and moral influences, as will conduce to their reformation and the prevention of crime.”

The Act also provides that in cases of offenders between the ages of fifteen and twenty-one, and in special circumstances up to the age of twenty-three, where it is expedient that the offender should be subject to detention under instruction and discipline, the Courts may, in lieu of passing a sentence of imprisonment, make an order for detention in a Borstal institution. The term of detention is restricted to not less than two years nor more than five years where the sentence is imposed by the Supreme Court and not less than one year nor more than three years in cases dealt with before the Magistrate’s Court.

The Minister of Justice, if satisfied that a prisoner whose age does not exceed twenty-five years might with advantage be detained in a Borstal institution, may direct the transfer of such person to a Borstal institution. The Minister is also empowered to direct the transfer to a Borstal institution of women and girls detained in a reformatory home.

The Minister of Education, if satisfied that an inmate of an industrial school may with advantage be detained in a Borstal institution, may direct the transfer of such inmate thereto.

The prison statistics given above include the commitments to Borstal institutions, but dealing separately with Borstal figures it will be seen that during the year 139 lads and 25 girls—a total of 164—were committed direct to the Borstal institutions by the Courts, and 38 youths and 4 young women were transferred from industrial schools and other institutions to the Borstals for the purpose of training and discipline.

The terms of detention ordered by the Courts are maximum only, and this largely explains the relatively lengthy terms awarded. A short term is found to be futile where a young person is untrained and undisciplined. Short terms also lessen the deterrent effect because of the fact that the conditions are aimed to socialize rather than to be rigorous and punitive; consequently a brief period merely gives an experience that removes the dread of detention without involving the irksomeness of prolonged loss of liberty.

In this connection the following observation by Lord Hewart, the Lord Chief Justice of England, is apropos:—

It was not generally recognized that there were few more effective ways of manufacturing criminals than in sending young offenders unnecessarily to prison, where they might easily find themselves far more comfortable than they expected to be, where they might make acquaintance with men and methods likely to bring them to ruin, and where, after serving some short sentence of complete futility, they might abandon forever their repugnance to prison and all that it involved.”

The actual period served is contingent upon the response of the inmates individually to the socializing influences of the institutions. Each case is subject to review from time to time by the Parole Board, and an inmate is detained no longer than is considered necessary to develop a sense of responsibility and self-respect. Unduly prolonged detention beyond saturation-point tends to develop resentment and other undesirable emotional reactions, which defeat the purpose of the institution; thus frequent and regular reviews of the cases to ascertain the fitness of inmates for release is an essential feature of the system.

The system of Borstal training was fully outlined in last year’s annual report. The splendid efforts of the Superintendents and their staffs, at the three institutions, to make the system a success is shown in their reports included in the Appendix hereto.

Apart from the success revealed by the statistics given hereunder, the above-mentioned reports are particularly interesting in that they show in detail what a really fine work is being carried on in dealing with those young offenders who under the old system would be intermingling with hardened criminals in our ordinary prisons.

The aim of the system of Borstal training is a balanced round of work, education and recreation, the primary purpose being to develop a sense of self-respect and self-reliance and the habits of industry and co-operation so essential to fit inmates for a life of freedom and responsibility, and at the same time equip them with habits of industry and vocational skill which will enable them to take their places in the community with confidence and a reasonable prospect of success.

During the year a comprehensive educational programme, including school classes, lectures, and debates, has been arranged. The physical welfare of the inmates has been given careful attention, and, in addition to regular physical drill, organized games form part of the curriculum, while occasional visits from outside teams to compete with the inmates at football, basketball, and cricket matches have been a new departure and have proved a pronounced success. The brief contact with outside life is refreshing. The inmates are given a consciousness that they are not entirely a class apart from