

Prison Reform

COMPETITION WITH FREE LABOR ABOLISHED—PRISONERS EMPLOYED IN WORK ON THE LAND AND IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF PUBLIC WORKS.

When the present Government came into office, the inmates of the Central Prison were employed in various industries operated by commercial concerns. The labor of the prisoners was sold under contract, and the product was disposed of throughout the Province and elsewhere in the open market in competition with free labor.

The Government determined to put an end to this system so injurious to free labor, and to introduce thorough prison reform. The existing contracts were therefore terminated after provision had been made for the employment of the prisoners in another and better way.

THE NEW SYSTEM

Meanwhile a Commission was appointed to visit a number of modern prisons, and, as a result of the report presented, it was decided to move the Central Prison to the country. A large farm, consisting of 840 acres, near the City of Guelph was selected. As soon as temporary buildings could be erected a group of eighteen prisoners was sent up from the Central Prison at Toronto. This number was gradually increased, and now over two hundred prisoners are on the farm at Guelph, all engaged in outdoor work necessary in the erection of the buildings that will be required.

The prisoners are assigned their work in different parts of the farm and have to be trusted. Ordinary prison methods, armed guards, cropping the hair, striped suits, etc., have all been dispensed with. The results have already been most gratifying.

The men, instead of leaving prison hardened by their confinement in the cells and physically weaker than when they were sentenced, now have a chance to reform, and are discharged in a condition to take to honest employment and to lead a new life.

WHAT THE FARM PRODUCES

Although the Prison Farm has been established such a short time, the prisoners have produced largely from it. In one year the following products were harvested:—

5,505 bushels of Potatoes
1,500 bushels of Turnips
700 bushels of Wheat
100 bushels of Peas
3,985 bushels of Oats
138 tons of Hay
130 acres of Alfalfa
44 acres of Ensilage
6 acres of Table Vegetables.

In addition to these products of the farm, the following stock has been cared for:—

116 Cows and Heifers
104 Milking Cows
45 Calves
69 Pigs
39 Horses