

birthday may be dealt with in the Children's Court, and in practice this procedure is generally adopted. This means that nearly 30 per cent. of the persons admitted to adult probation were in their eighteenth, nineteenth, or twentieth years. Over 62 per cent. of the new cases were under twenty-five years of age. This is quite in keeping with the accepted principle that probation is more suited to the young offender. That the Act is not limited in its scope is shown by the other end of the table, from which it will be noted that one person over seventy years of age was released to the care of a Probation Officer.

Of the 2,362 cases dealt with during the year, 59 were before the Court again for minor breaches of their probationary licences, 51 were brought up for sentence on the original charge, 108 were dealt with for further offences, of whom 50 reverted to probationary control after serving a short term of imprisonment, while 10 absconded and were still untraced at the close of the year. The number who lapsed totalled 228, which is less than 10 per cent. of the total dealt with and is slightly better than the average.

The amount collected by way of costs of prosecution and restitution-money was £7,669 2s. 6d., which exceeded the previous year's record figure by over £1,100. The total collected under these headings since the inception of the scheme now amounts to £129,564. The value of these collections, which are generally in the form of small weekly instalments, cannot be overemphasized. Were the alternative method adopted of punishing these offenders by detention not only would the State have to bear the costs of prosecution, but also the innocent victims of the offences would have no redress. The necessity to make regular refunds has a very salutary effect on a probationer's habits. When he has completed his payments he is advised and encouraged by the Probation Officer to continue setting aside a regular sum, with the result that when the offender passes from the control of the Probation Officer he frequently has a substantial deposit in a Post Office Savings-bank account, or a National Savings Account, or both.

Turning to the table of offences, it will be noted that just over 68 per cent. of the persons dealt with were charged with offences against property, 50 per cent. being for theft. The next highest group was ship-desertion, 69 persons being admitted under this heading. During the past two or three years several Magistrates have dealt with ship-deserters by admitting them to probation and making it a condition of their release that they shall accept employment on any overseas ship offering. During the year a number left the Dominion under the terms of their licences, but at the end of the year there were approximately 40 of these cases still on our books, being mainly those dealt with late in the year. Another class of offence which remains relatively high in the list is unlawful conversion of motor-vehicles. There is a good deal of adverse comment by a section of the community regarding the apparent leniency extended for this class of offence. The Courts have frequently expressed the opinion that where it can safely be avoided first offenders should not be sent to prison, except on serious charges. Probation, with an order for reparation of any damage done, then seems to offer a constructive alternative in certain cases.

As has been mentioned in previous reports, there is no limit to the class of offence for which probation may be granted, the only stipulation being that the offender shall have been convicted of an offence punishable by imprisonment. It is unusual for probation to be granted for offences involving deliberation or brutality, or for the more serious sexual offences. Last year the offences ranged from flying an aircraft without a licence to acts of indecency, and included such widely divergent offences as committing an act likely to endanger safety of the public on railways, bigamy, arson, and concealing the body of a child.