

1922.
NEW ZEALAND.

PRISONS DEPARTMENT.
PRISONS BOARD

(ANNUAL REPORT OF) FOR 1921.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

MEMBERS OF BOARD.

Right Hon. Sir ROBERT STOUT, P.C., K.C.M.G. (President); Sir GEORGE FENWICK, Kt.; EDWIN HALL, Esq.;
FRANK HAY, Esq., M.B.; C. B. JORDAN, Esq.; CHARLES E. MATTHEWS, Esq.; WILLIAM REECE, Esq.

SIR,—

Wellington, 31st July, 1922.

I have the honour to forward herewith the report of the Prisons Board for the year, 1921.

I have, &c.,

ROBERT STOUT, President.

The Hon. the Minister of Justice, Wellington.

REPORT OF THE PRISONS BOARD FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER, 1921.

The Board has to report that during the year 1921 it dealt with a total of 841 cases, at meetings held at Wellington, Waikeria, Auckland, New Plymouth, Addington, Paparua, Waikune, and Invercargill. The following table sets out, under their respective statutory headings, the number of cases considered at each quarterly meeting, together with the decisions reached:—

Table A.

Month of Meeting.	Place of Meeting.	Cases considered of					Totals.	Decisions showing how Cases were disposed of.						Totals.
		Habitual Criminals and Offenders.	Persons undergoing Reformative Detention.	Hard-labour Prisoners.	Crimes Amendment Provisions for Discharge from Probation.			Recommended for Release on Probation.	Petitions deferred.	Petitions declined.	Recommended for Discharge from Prison or from Probation.	Recommended for Transfer to Rotatoria Inebriates Institution.	Habitual Criminals granted Remission of Hard-labour Sentence.	
January	Wellington	1	..	..	..	1	..	..	..	1	..	..	1
February	Invercargill	2	151	8	8	169	42	106	8	13	..	..	169
	Paparua	5	39	7	..	51	22	26	2	1	..	..	51
	Addington	..	10	3	..	13	4	7	..	2	..	..	13
March	Wellington	..	..	2	..	2	2	..	..	..	..	..	2
April	Wellington	..	..	1	..	1	1	..	..	..	..	..	1
May	Wellington	8	46	28	3	85	27	46	7	5	..	..	85
June	Wellington	1	..	..	1	2	1	..	..	1	..	..	2
August	Wellington	4	71	11	4	90	23	36	20	11	..	..	90
October	Wellington	5	61	54	2	122	26	59	22	13	..	2	122	
November	New Plymouth	1	19	1	..	21	9	11	1	..	..	..	21
	Waikune	2	14	6	..	22	10	11	..	1	..	..	22
	Auckland	49	81	25	..	155	46	65	34	8	1	1	155	
	Waikeria	..	74	14	..	88	21	56	7	4	..	..	88
December	Wellington	..	1	..	..	1	1	..	..	..	..	..	1
	Wellington	..	..	1	..	1	..	..	..	1	..	..	1
		78	567	161	18	824	235	423	101	61	1	3	824	

GENERAL RESULTS OF PRISONS BOARD'S WORK FROM 1911 TO 1921.

Table B.—Reformatory-detention Cases.

Total number sentenced to reformatory detention	1,735
Released on recommendation of Board	1,180
Discharged from reformatories on completion of full sentence	166
Total number released	1,346
Died whilst undergoing sentence	22
Committed to mental hospitals, &c.	21
Remaining in reformatories on 31st December, 1921	346
	389
	1,735
Total number released as above	1,346
Of whom there were—	
Returned to reformatories for non-compliance with conditions of release	57
Committed to reformatories for further offences whilst on probation	79
Sentenced for offences committed after discharge or expiry of period of probation	136
Total number returned and recommitted	272
Absconded and not traced	22
Died	6
Left Dominion to return to former domiciles	25
Known to have been killed in action while on active service	3
Returned to Weraroa	1
Transferred to Rotoroa Inebriates Institution	1
Transferred to mental hospitals	2
Transferred to Mount Magdala Home	1
Transferred to Salvation Army Home	1
Reporting on probation at 31st December, 1921	103
Number who have not offended since their discharge or expiration of period of probation, and presumably doing well	909
	1,074
	1,346

Of the total number released after undergoing reformatory detention 20 per cent. have been returned to prison either for non-compliance with conditions of release or for committing further offences; 5 per cent. have died, absconded, &c.; leaving 75 per cent. who have not further offended.

Of the number recommitted to reformatories, 63 individuals were returned twice, 20 three times, 8 four times, 4 five times, and 1 seven times.

Table C sets out the habitual criminals dealt with during the same period as that covered by Table B.

Table C.—Habitual Criminals.

Total number declared habitual criminals	306
Of whom there were—	
Released on recommendation of Board	250
Died whilst undergoing sentence	4
Remaining in prison on 31st December, 1921	52
	306
Total number released as above	250
Of whom there were—	
Returned to prison for non-compliance with conditions of release	41
Committed to prison for further offences	73
Sentenced for offences committed after their discharge from probation	11
Total number returned	125
Absconded and not traced	20
Died	8
Left Dominion to return to former domiciles	35
Transferred to mental hospital	1
Transferred to consumptive sanatorium	1
Reporting on probation at 31st December, 1921	32
Number who have not offended, so far as known, since their discharge from probation, and presumably doing well	28
	125
	250

Of the total number of habitual criminals released on probation 50 per cent. were returned to prison either for non-compliance with the conditions of probation or for committing further offences; 26 per cent. have left the Dominion, absconded, &c.; leaving 24 per cent. who have not further offended.

Of those returned to prison 24 returned twice, 8 returned three times, 1 returned four times, and 1 returned five times.

Since 1917 the Board has dealt with the following hard-labour cases :—

Table D.—Hard-labour Cases.

Total individual cases considered	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	370
Number discharged from prison on recommendation of Board	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	25
Number released on probation on recommendation of Board	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	95
Left the Dominion	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	8
Recommitted for other offences	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1
Completed probation	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	39
Reporting on probation at 31st December, 1921	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	42

Offenders Probation Act, 1920.

In terms of section 12 of the Offenders Probation Act, 1920, any person granted probation under that Act is permitted to apply to the Prisons Board for discharge from probation after half the term to which he has been sentenced has expired. During the year 17 applications of this nature were received by the Board with the requisite reports from the respective Probation Officers. After due consideration of the merits of each case the Board agreed to the discharge of 13 of the applicants. Particular care was taken to see that each probationer had complied strictly with the conditions imposed, including the restitution of moneys wrongfully appropriated and costs ordered to be paid by the Court, and that the Probation Officer's report was entirely satisfactory.

GENERAL SUMMARY.

The following table shows the cases considered year by year by the Board since its inception :—

Table E.

Year.	Habitual Criminals and Offenders.	Reformative Detention.	Hard Labour.	Probationers for Discharge from Probation.		Totals.
				Crimes Amendment Act.	Offender Probationers.	
1911	65	105	..	..	..	170
1912	159	259	..	..	..	418
1913	157	403	..	..	..	560
1914	117	332	..	..	..	449
1915	101	273	..	..	..	374
1916	102	322	..	..	..	424
1917	95	329	14	..	..	438
1918	87	201	92	..	..	380
1919	97	471	115	18	..	701
1920	74	467	75	32	..	648
1921	75	564	167	18	17	841
Totals ..	1,129	3,726	463	68	17	5,403

From the table shown above it will be noticed that the number of cases considered in 1921 exceeded that of the previous year by almost 200. This substantial increase is largely accounted for by the extension of the powers of the Prisons Board under the Crimes Amendment Act, 1920, and the Offenders Probation Act, 1920. Where formerly the Board was restricted to the consideration of the cases of hard-labour prisoners whose sentences exceeded two years, it now, under the latest amendment to the Crimes Act, has had conferred upon it authority to deal with all hard-labour cases irrespective of length of sentence.

As previously pointed out, the question of the variation of the terms imposed by the Courts upon offender probationers has now been placed in the hands of the Board, and under the Act all such persons are eligible to petition the Board on completion of half their respective probationary periods. As will be seen, during the first year of the operation of this provision of the Act the cases of 17 offender probationers were dealt with, and everything points to this section being more frequently availed of as the provisions become more widely known to this particular class of offender.

Of the reformative-detention prisoners released by the Board since its inception the percentage of those who have "made good" remains much the same as that shown in the previous report. In view of the trade depression and the consequential scarcity of employment the fact that 75 per cent. of those released have "made good" must be considered highly satisfactory.

The habitual criminals are in an entirely different category from the reformative-detention prisoners. Almost without exception they have been passing in and out of prison for a number of years, and have generally become confirmed in their criminal habits before being declared "habituals" by the Courts. Under the circumstances the fact that 24 per cent. of those granted their liberty on the Board's recommendation have not again offended is an indication that the passing of the indeterminate-sentence law has had and is still having a satisfactory effect on a number of our more hardened offenders.

The Board believes the new prison system that has been in force for the past eleven years—modified as it has been in some details—has, by establishing robust health and by sure reward for exemplary conduct and industry, been successful in reclaiming many from an evil career, and in helping the individual to lead the life of a good citizen. The Board, however, feels that much more must be done to continue and consolidate the work after discharge of inmates from our prisons and reformatory institutions. Suitable work must be found for inmates on discharge, and intelligent guidance and help afforded them. The Prisons Board as a body cannot undertake these duties. There are at least three Prisoners' Aid Societies and a few individuals doing that class of work, but that is not enough. It is urged by the Board that organizations should be formed on similar lines to those provided for by statute in England for the after-care of prisoners. It is apparent in many cases that unless men and women on their release from prison are cared for individually they have little opportunity of rehabilitating themselves, in spite of the training they have received while in prison fitting them to take up work for which they are well equipped. The inability of ex-prisoners to obtain employment on their release is one of the most frequent causes of their return to crime. The Board earnestly hopes that an endeavour will be made at an early date to create such after-care organizations.

There is also needed some institution for female derelicts—"the shavings from the workshops of humanity," as they have been termed. There has been established an institution of this class for men, but one is required for women, as we have pointed out before. It should be a small farm or a large market garden not far removed from some city or town, where the inmates should be able to maintain themselves by work in the open air.

To have females serving a few months and then being discharged to again offend and be imprisoned until, against many, even sixty or seventy or more convictions are recorded is of no benefit to any one. Old and irreclaimable offenders should be segregated under reasonably comfortable conditions, though freedom to roam as they please be denied them.

When visiting farm properties under development by the Prisons Department the members of the Board have been impressed with the good effect of this work upon the inmates, and of the satisfactory financial results obtained by the sale of butterfat and general farm-produce. We understand that the total cash receipts of the prisons have been during the last financial year £49,806, but the value of the prisoners' labour is more than that sum, for the public works of the country have been aided by prison labour to the extent of £21,000.

In view of the reformatory influence exercised on the individual inmates, and of the value to the State of the development of its lands, the Board desires to express its approval of the Department's latest undertaking at Hautu. Prisoners have been sent to reclaim pumice land near Taupo, and what may be termed an "open-air" prison has been established. When the land has been reclaimed it is proposed to open it for settlement. This system is capable of much development, and may be the means of encouraging settlement in many parts of the Dominion that are lying waste and uncultivated.

The Board would also again direct the attention of the Government to the resolution embodied in their last year's report. It was as follows:—

"Whereas an increasing number of sexual offences has been the subject of frequent and serious judicial comment, especially in cases where young children were the victims, or the very serious nature of the charge connoted a perversion dangerous to the moral well-being of society; and, as the experience of the Board in dealing with prisoners of this class accords, as far as it goes, with the now generally accepted opinion that, with certain exceptions, persons committing unnatural offences labour under physical disease or disability, or mental deficiency or disorder, or both, which accounts for the sexual perversion and the morbid character of the offence charged: It is resolved by the Prisons Board to strongly recommend to the Government an amendment of the Crimes Act under which such offenders could be dealt with scientifically—

"(1.) Before sentence is pronounced, by furnishing expert medical or surgical reports or evidence:

"(2.) By sanctioning an indeterminate sentence:

"(3.) By segregating persons so sentenced and subjecting them, under proper safeguards, to any medical or surgical treatment which may be deemed necessary or expedient either for their own good or in the public interest."

During last year the number of sexual crimes has increased, and it is necessary for our community that this request should be carefully considered, and, if possible, a remedy found for this evil.

ROBERT STOUT, President.

Wellington, 31st July, 1922.

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