

of the Dominion's population, and also to the addition to the criminal population that has taken place as a result of the general depression following the war period.

The beneficial effect of the provisions of the Crimes Amendment Act, 1910, which first authorized the reformative-detention sentence and established the probationary system for prisoners, is amply demonstrated by the fact that during the whole period from 1911 to 1922 the returns show that out of nearly 1,400 prisoners serving sentences of reformative detention who have been placed on probation on the recommendation of the Prisons Board approximately 75 per cent. have "made good."

The habitual criminals who have been granted probation under the same Act are, of course, of a different class; but even with this class of hardened criminal—all of whom have had many terms of imprisonment, sometimes extending over half a lifetime—the probation system has resulted in the rehabilitation of approximately 25 per cent. of those who have been released. Without the chance that the system gives them, by far the larger proportion of those who have now become useful and self-respecting members of the community would have continued their criminal careers until death claimed them.

During the year the Board visited all the prisons and prison institutions in the Dominion, and has to express its satisfaction at the continued progress made by the Department in advancing its various undertakings and in improving from year to year the facilities that are provided under its enlightened system for the rehabilitation of the prisoners under its charge. Among other places visited was the Hautu land-development camp near Lake Taupo, where the members of the Board found every reason to feel pleased with the energy displayed by the officers of the Department in pressing forward the various branches of work involved in clearing, breaking in, and laying down in grass the entrance block to the large area of country that has been allotted to the Department by the Government for opening up for future settlement.

In terms of the Offenders Probation Act, 1920, thirty probationers petitioned the Board, compared with seventeen the previous year—ample proof that the provision relating to discharge from probation is being more widely availed of. Of the thirty applicants, twenty-one were granted discharge, whilst the balance were refused.

The attention of the Government is again directed to the resolution embodied in the Board reports for the last two years. 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."

It is a matter of grave concern that this state of affairs should be longer allowed to continue, as statistics show that offences, under this heading are yearly increasing. Exclusive of incest cases, there were forty-six offenders sentenced in 1920 on charges of carnal knowledge, indecent assault, &c., sixty-one in 1921, and sixty-nine in 1922.

ROBERT STOUT, President.

Wellington, 31st July, 1923.

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