

SESSION II  
1923.  
NEW ZEALAND.

# OFFENDERS PROBATION ACT, 1920

(REPORT ON OPERATIONS OF), FOR THE YEAR 1922-23.

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

The Hon. the MINISTER OF JUSTICE to His Excellency the GOVERNOR-GENERAL.

MY LORD,—

Wellington, 31st July, 1923.

I have the honour to submit to Your Excellency the report of the Chief Probation Officer on the operations of the Offenders Probation Act for the year 1922-23.

I have, &c.,

C. J. PARR,  
Minister of Justice.

The CHIEF PROBATION OFFICER to the Hon. the MINISTER OF JUSTICE.

SIR,—

Office of the Chief Probation Officer, Wellington, 15th July, 1923.

I have the honour to present my annual report and the reports of the honorary Probation Officers on the working of the adult probation system of the Dominion for the year ended 31st March, 1923.

## PRISONERS RELEASED ON PROBATION IN TERMS OF THE CRIMES AMENDMENT ACTS, 1910 AND 1920.

Until recent years the work of the honorary Probation Officers was confined to the administration of the First Offenders Probation Act, 1886 (consolidated 1908), and afterwards of the Offenders Probation Act, 1920, but on reference to their reports for the past year it will be found that some of them are also Probation Officers under the Crimes Amendment Act, 1910. This means that they have now to care for habitual criminals, reformative-detention, and hard-labour offenders who have been released on probation on the recommendation of the Prisons Board, as well as for those who have been granted probation in lieu of imprisonment. The volume and complexity of their work has thus been largely increased, but the added burden cast upon them does not appear to have reduced their efficiency or enthusiasm in the least degree. In many cases their supervision over released prisoners has had a markedly good effect, men of this class having often been found employment and protected from themselves and from undesirable friends while in such employment until the time arrived when they were able to stand alone and work out their own salvation. Without the care and trouble taken by the Probation Officers in regard to such cases many more offenders would have relapsed and been again sentenced either for further offences or for breaches of probation. Relapses, of course, occur, particularly in the case of habitual criminals who have been given by the Prisons Board an opportunity of showing whether they can maintain under restricted liberty the reputations they have made while in prison for industry and good conduct. Relapses of this nature are treated very seriously by a section of the daily Press. One highly reputable journal recently referred in somewhat scathing terms to the action of the Prisons Board in releasing such offenders from safe custody. One wonders whether the writer of the article in question had any conception of the scope of the Board's work, of the number of offenders released on probation who are never heard of again either by the Courts or even by the police, who complete the full period of their sentences on probation, and are absorbed into the general working community. Obviously, there must be a percentage of failures. It is equally obvious that it is only the failures that come under the notice of the Press. Their number is far exceeded by the successes, as is shown in the Board's annual report. Is the system of probation for prisoners to be