

SESSION II.
1923.
NEW ZEALAND.

PRISONS DEPARTMENT.
PRISONS BOARD
(ANNUAL REPORT OF) FOR 1922.

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. MATHEWS, Esq.; WILLIAM REECE, Esq.

Sir,—

Wellington, 31st July, 1923.

I have the honour to forward herewith the report of the Prisons Board for the year 1922.

I have, &c.,

ROBERT STOUT, President.

The Hon. the Minister of Justice.

REPORT OF THE PRISONS BOARD

FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31ST DECEMBER, 1922.

The Board has to report that during the year 1922 it dealt with a total of 1,007 cases at meetings held at Wellington, Invercargill, Paparua, Addington, Christchurch, Wi Tako, Point Halswell, Waikune, Hautu, Auckland, and Waikeria. The following table sets out, under their respective statutory headings, the number of cases considered at each 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 Act.	Probationers for Discharge from Probation.		Offender Probationers.	Recommended for Release on Probation.	Petitions deferred.	Petitions declined.	Recommended for Discharge from Prison or from Probation.	Offender Probationers ordered discharge.	Recommended Variation Terms of Probation.	Recommended for Remission of Hard-labour Sentence.		
Feb.	Wellington	..	..	2	..	..	2	2	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	2
Mar.	Invercargill	1	140	8	..	..	149	40	101	3	5	..	..	..	..	..	149
	Paparua	5	37	22	..	..	64	26	31	3	4	..	..	..	..	..	64
	Addington	..	6	1	1	..	8	4	3	..	..	..	1	..	..	..	8
	Christchurch	5	30	26	4	9	74	34	18	3	8	8	1	..	2	..	74
April	Wellington	..	7	10	1	2	20	5	2	2	6	2	..	..	3	..	20
	Wi Tako	..	8	8	..	..	16	4	8	..	4	..	..	..	..	..	16
	Pt. Halswell	..	13	1	..	..	14	7	6	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	14
June	Wellington	11	71	62	5	10	159	36	83	6	20	9	..	..	5	..	159
Aug.	Wellington	12	79	47	3	7	148	29	77	17	22	2	..	..	1	..	148
Oct.	Wellington	4	49	37	5	2	97	19	57	8	12	..	..	..	1	..	97
	Waikune	2	17	7	..	..	26	12	13	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	26
	Hautu	1	7	4	..	..	12	5	5	..	2	..	..	..	..	..	12
	Auckland	52	61	25	..	..	138	48	56	16	13	..	..	..	5	..	138
Nov.	Waikeria	..	67	10	..	..	77	18	46	2	11	..	..	..	..	..	77
Dec.	Wellington	..	2	1	..	..	3	2	..	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	3
		93	594	271	19	30	1,007	291	506	61	108	21	2	18	1,007		

GENERAL RESULTS OF PRISONS BOARD'S WORK FROM 1911 TO 1922.

TABLE B.—REFORMATIVE-DETENTION CASES.

Total number sentenced to reformatory detention	2,026
Released on recommendation of Board	1,394
Discharged from reformatories on completion of full sentence	225
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Total number released	1,619
Of whom there were—	
Returned to reformatories for non-compliance with conditions of release ..	73
Committed to reformatories for further offences whilst on probation ..	95
Sentenced for offences committed after discharge or expiry of period of probation ..	153
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Total number returned and recommitted	321
Absconded and not traced	25
Died	7
Left Dominion to return to former domiciles	35
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	3
Transferred to Mount Magdala Home	1
Transferred to Salvation Army Home	1
Reporting on probation at 31st December, 1922	113
Number who have not offended since their discharge or expiration of period of probation, and presumably doing well	1,108
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	1,619

Of the total number released after undergoing reformatory detention 19·9 per cent. have been returned to prison either for non-compliance with conditions of release or for committing further offences; 3·7 per cent. have left the Dominion or absconded; 1 per cent. have died or been transferred to mental hospitals, &c.; leaving 75·4 per cent. who have not further offended.

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	339
Of whom there were released on recommendation of Board	283
Of whom there were—	
Returned to prison for non-compliance with conditions of release	42
Committed to prison for further offences	84
Sentenced for offences committed after their discharge from prison or from probation	16
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Total number returned	142
Absconded and not traced	23
Died	9
Left Dominion to return to former domiciles	38
Transferred to mental hospital	1
Transferred to consumptive sanatorium	1
Reporting on probation at 31st December, 1922	39
Number who have not offended, as far as known, since their discharge from probation and presumably doing well	30
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	141
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	283

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; 21·6 per cent. have left the Dominion or absconded; 3·9 per cent. have died or been transferred to mental hospitals, &c.; leaving 24·5 per cent. who have not further offended.

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

TABLE D.—HARD-LABOUR CASES.

Total individual cases considered	590
Number discharged from prison on recommendation of Board	85
Number released on probation on recommendation of Board	160
Left the Dominion	12
Recommitted for other offences	3
Completed probation	94
Reporting on probation at 31st December, 1922	35

OFFENDERS PROBATION ACT, 1920.

Under section 12 of the Offenders Probation Act, 1920, provision is made enabling any person released under that Act to apply to the Prisons Board for discharge from probation after completion of half the period to which offender was sentenced. During the year thirty requests of this nature were received, and after careful consideration of the facts in each case the Board agreed to the discharge of twenty-one of the applicants.

TABLE E.—SHOWING RELEASES AND DISCHARGES, ETC., EFFECTED EACH MONTH.

1922.	Released on Probation.			Discharges from Prison.			Discharges from Probation.				Hard-labour Re-missions.	Total.
	Hard-labour Cases.	Habitual Criminal Cases.	Reformative Detention Cases.	Hard-labour Cases.	Habitual Criminal Cases.	Reformative Detention Cases.	Hard-labour Cases.	Habitual Criminal Cases.	Reformative Detention Cases.	Offender Probation Cases.		
January ..	4	2	24	7	..	3	..	..	..	1	..	41
February ..	7	5	9	2	..	1	1	..	..	1	..	26
March ..	7	3	30	6	1	3	..	1	1	7	1	60
April ..	4	1	18	4	..	1	..	..	..	1	..	29
May ..	10	1	25	5	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	42
June ..	6	..	13	5	..	..	..	..	..	10	1	35
July ..	6	1	13	8	..	4	..	..	2	1	3	38
August ..	6	..	11	4	..	2	..	..	1	1	1	26
September ..	1	1	10	7	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	19
October ..	..	..	5	3	..	3	..	..	1	..	1	13
November ..	12	14	27	8	3	6	..	1	2	..	1	74
December ..	2	1	5	1	..	1	1	..	..	..	1	12
Totals ..	65	29	190	60	4	24*	2	2	7	22	10	415

* Includes one discharge from mental hospital.

GENERAL SUMMARY.

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

TABLE F.

Year.	Habitual Criminals and Offenders.	Reformative Detention.	Hard Labour.	Probationers for Discharge from Probation.		Totals.
				Crimes Amend-ment 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
1922	93	594	271	19	30	1,007
Totals ..	1,222	4,320	734	87	47	6,410

The above table indicates very clearly the growth of the Board's work since it was first established in 1911. In 1912, the first full year of operation, 418 cases were dealt with, while for the year under review (1922) 1,007 prisoners and probationers of all classes came before the Board. This large increase is partly accounted for by the fact that since the year 1917 all hard-labour prisoners have been placed under the Board's jurisdiction, while in 1921 the duties of the Board were further added to by the power given it in that year to grant discharges from probation to persons released under the Offenders Probation Act. The total cases dealt with under these two headings alone numbered 301 during the past year. The further increase that has taken place is to some extent due to the growth

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 reformatory-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 reformatory 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.

Approximate Cost of Paper.—Preparation, not given; printing (675 copies), £5.

By Authority: W. A. G. SKINNER, Government Printer, Wellington.—1923.

Price 3d.]