

1925.  
NEW ZEALAND.

# OFFENDERS PROBATION ACT, 1920

(REPORT ON OPERATIONS OF), FOR THE YEAR 1924-25.

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

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

Wellington, 10th August, 1925.

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 1924-25.

I have, &c.,

C. J. PARR,

Minister of Justice.

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

SIR,—

Office of the Chief Probation Officer, Wellington, 6th August, 1925.

I have the honour to present my annual report, together with the report of the Deputy Chief Probation Officer, 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, 1925.

The probation statistics appended to this report show that during the past year 586 offenders were admitted to probation, whilst 73 persons—who were convicted and ordered to come up for sentence when called upon—automatically came under the Probation Act, making a total of 659 offenders who received the benefits of the probation system. The steady increase in the number of persons admitted to probation indicates a growing confidence in the system as an effective means of disciplining and reforming certain classes of delinquents without commitment to reformatory institutions or prisons. The principle of probation has now a safe place in our system of criminal law, and our efforts are in the direction of gradually enlarging its scope and establishing an ideal and inexpensive method of dealing with offenders whom the Courts consider worthy of an opportunity to prove their desire to reform. Probation is not to be regarded as a panacea for crime, and it is not suggested that it should be applied in every case where first offenders come before the Courts. Careful discrimination based on a thorough investigation and knowledge of the previous record of every offender is absolutely necessary, and in carrying out their investigations the Probation Officers are confronted with difficult and delicate problems which require the most careful and intelligent handling. To achieve success the Probation Act must be sympathetically administered, but sentimental leniency or slackness in the treatment of delinquents are fraught with grave social consequences, and the successful Probation Officer must act firmly but kindly.

It will be observed from the statistics that of the 586 persons who were admitted to probation during the year 43 failed to respond to the leniency offered them—making the percentage of successes 92.66. The result is slightly less satisfactory than the figures for the previous year; but a system which saves from the stigma of prison over 92 per cent. of offenders and incidentally benefits the persons defrauded, as well as saving expense to the Treasury, is worthy of development. It must be remembered that offenders sometimes come before the Court before the Probation Officer can thoroughly investigate their cases, and in other instances antecedents of offenders cannot be ascertained—particularly when they are not long in the Dominion. A number of such cases are doomed to failure, but the opportunity to make good is offered. When these and other handicaps under which Probation Officers labour are considered the actual number of failures seems remarkably small.

The collection of Court costs and restitution-moneys is an important feature of the probation work. Court costs amounting to £745 9s. 9d., and restitution-moneys aggregating £3,547 3s. 2d. were collected during the past financial year. The total amount collected constitutes a record, being £1,337 higher than the total collection in any previous year.

*Prisoners released on Probation from Prisons and Reformatories.*—This section of the probation system has grown considerably during the past few years. The increase is mainly due to the provisions of the Crimes Amendment Act of 1920, which gives the Prisons Board power to recommend the release of hard-labour prisoners as well as those sentenced to reformatory detention or declared habitual criminals. The Probation Officers keep in close personal touch with the probationers and make every possible effort to prevent them from lapsing again into crime; but the class of men who are released from prison on probation presents an entirely different problem from the first offender. The need of close supervision in these cases is very necessary, and the Probation Officers, to be successful, must insist on full compliance with the conditions of release. For various reasons it is undesirable for many of this class of probationer to be employed in or near a city. Employment is found for the greater proportion of these probationers in country districts away from old associates and other temptations. They are encouraged by the Probation Officers to save their earnings and many of them have good sums to their credit in the Post Office Savings-bank.

*General.*—The report of the Deputy Chief Probation Officer, who is in personal touch with the detail work, indicates that the work of the Probation Officers throughout the Dominion is being maintained at the high standard which has prevailed in past years.

M. HAWKINS,  
Chief Probation Officer.

#### REPORT OF DEPUTY CHIEF PROBATION OFFICER.

I have the honour to report regarding the work carried out by the Probation Officers during the year ended 31st March, 1925.

Under the Offenders Probation Act the Dominion is divided into 181 probation districts, an officer being appointed for each district. In the four principal cities women Probation Officers deal with the cases of female offenders. There are altogether 185 Probation Officers throughout the Dominion. Of these, 170 are members of the Police Force, six are permanent officers of the Prisons Department, four are "part-time" officers who receive an annual honorarium for their services, and the remaining five are "volunteer" Probation Officers, who, with one exception, are officers of the Salvation Army.

The efforts made during the past few years to improve the system of records and the equipment of Probation Officers have advanced the efficiency of the Probation system generally. Particular attention for some considerable time back has been given to the collection of costs of prosecution and restitution-moneys, and the greatest care is being exercised in dealing with these matters. The Department's instructions and forms at one time may have been regarded as unnecessary "red tape," but it is evident that Probation Officers now realize that in the interests of the probationers, the State, and the people defrauded, as well as in their own individual interests, it is very necessary that a system should be established which complies with the requirements of the Audit and Treasury Departments and safeguards the interests of all concerned.

We endeavour from headquarters to assist Probation Officers in the development of the probation system, and co-operation between the Probation Officers and the police and Court officials is always encouraged. Were it not for the spirit of co-operation amongst the Probation Officers themselves a high standard of efficiency and success in the development of the probation system would not be possible.

Although probation has long ago passed through the experimental stage and has proved to be socially if not financially profitable, its future development is in need of continued careful study and of intelligent guidance. The duties of Probation Officers are much more onerous and of greater value to the State than is generally recognized. Their difficulties are many. They are called upon from day to day to discriminate between truth and falsehood, between the plausible tale of the embryo criminal and the story of the offender who deserves the chance that probation can give him. The success of probation depends to a great extent on the experience, ability, and personality of the Probation Officer. In the large cities the Probation Officers have so many cases (numbers of them of a complex nature) that they are unable to give the time to supervision that in some instances is necessary. They devote themselves, however, to the work with steady perseverance, and their services are of infinitely greater value than their remuneration would indicate.

As before mentioned, the great majority of our Probation Officers are members of the Police Force. In the growing centres such as Hamilton, Palmerston North, Masterton, &c., the probation work is carried on by Senior Sergeants or Sergeants. The work in these towns is greater than can be adequately dealt with by the senior police officers, who have many other duties to attend to, with the result that considerable overtime is worked without fee or reward, and, fortunately, without complaints.

We find that members of the Police Force are scrupulously fair in their attitude towards the administration of the Offenders Probation Act and in their treatment of probationers. No complaints whatever of harsh or unfair treatment, either before or after conviction, were received from probationers throughout the year.

D. A. MACKINTOSH,  
Deputy Chief Probation Officer.

#### REPORTS OF HONORARY PROBATION OFFICERS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH, 1925.

W. J. CAMPBELL, GENERAL PROBATION OFFICER, AUCKLAND.

I have pleasure in submitting my third annual report as Probation Officer of the Auckland District, for the year ending 31st March, 1925. Appended are the figures showing the numbers dealt with during the year.

*Court Probationers.*—During the year 153 males were admitted to probation for varying periods. The following are the complete figures for the period under review :—

Probationers on register at 1st April, 1924 .. .. .	218
Probationers received from Auckland Courts .. .. .	153
Probationers received on transfer from other districts .. .. .	58
	211
Total dealt with .. .. .	429
of whom there were—	
Discharged by the Prisons Board .. .. .	9
Completed probationary term .. .. .	88
Transferred to other districts .. .. .	77
Sentenced for fresh offences .. .. .	4
	178
Total on register at 1st April, 1925 .. .. .	251

In addition to the 4 sentenced to terms of imprisonment for fresh offences, there were 27 probationers convicted of minor offences and breaches of probation, who were sentenced to varying short terms of imprisonment, and 5 who absconded, and have not so far been traced. This makes a total defaulters list of 36, this number being slightly less than 8 per cent. of the total dealt with during the year. Of these 36 probationers, 27 reverted to probationary conditions after punishment. All, with one exception, are now carrying out the terms of probation satisfactorily.

¶ The above figures thus show that there were really only 9 who did not in some measure take advantage of probation. The results thus shown are highly satisfactory, and are sufficient to prove the wisdom of the action of the Judges and Magistrates of this centre in so largely using the powers conferred by the Offenders Probation Act.

¶ When it is added that the sum of £1,226 17s. 10d. was paid by probationers as restitution and £172 16s. 8d. as costs of prosecution, the value of the Act and the results obtained from its working are further illustrated.

Apart from the purely monetary return, the principle of restitution, in its application to those admitted to probation, is one of the most effective factors of the system. The obligation of restitution has a very marked restraining and controlling influence on probationers, bringing home in very many cases the realization of opportunities lost, and has proved an incentive towards the formation of habits of thrift.

It has been gratifying to note the number who have completed their terms of probation in a creditable manner, and the attention, in the majority of cases, that is given to the probationary conditions imposed. There are cases, however, where laxity has been shown, but here again there are few who do not eventually realize that their liberty is conditional on strict adherence to the terms of probation. Quite a number of those admitted to probation during the year have been youths of the "gang" type, who have come before the Court for mischievous behaviour, and from observation I am of the opinion that probation with strict conditions as to hours, amusements, &c., will prove an effective deterrent for these offenders.

Much more might be said of the more intimate side of the probation work, but to do so would unduly lengthen my report. Two outstanding cases may, however, be mentioned, in which the probationers concerned have lately completed the payment of restitution, amounting to over £300 in each case. This money was paid by each in instalments from earnings. While giving due consideration to the compulsory condition, the probationers concerned are deserving of credit for fulfilling a condition that would have daunted many. In one of these cases the victim of the offence has been incapacitated owing to ill health, and but for the regular instalments of restitution which were forwarded to him he would have become a burden on the State.

¶ *Crimes Amendment Act Probationers.*—The average number reporting monthly during the year was 59. Of those released from prison on license, 41 completed their terms of probation, 4 were discharged from probation by the Prisons Board, and 2 left the Dominion by permission. Two were sentenced under section 15 of the Crimes Act, and continued on probation after serving the sentence imposed for the breach. One probationer absconded and was not traced, while 11, by reason of offences committed while on probation, had their licenses of conditional liberty cancelled. With a few exceptions, those who completed the term of probation did so creditably, and most of them are in good employment and doing well. The 11 whose licenses were cancelled are in that category mentioned in my last annual report—*i.e.*, those who either cannot or will not endeavour to redeem lost character. In these cases, bad associations and habits are the cause of their further downfall.

Consideration of these cases in the light of their prison experience and its after-effects brings up forcefully the value of the Offenders Probation Act in keeping so many of our youth away from the prison taint. It cannot be too fully realized that when probation is granted it may be that the offenders themselves, and the State also, are saved, the first from being and the other from keeping potential criminals.

Allowing in full measure for the discretion so necessary on the one hand in making recommendations for probation, and on the other in granting probation, it is surely wisdom to grant this "conditional liberty" in cases where this course can reasonably be taken.

The probation work in this centre is increasing yearly, and there is much of that work that cannot be measured by any set rule, or that can be classed as purely routine, but which is essential to make the work a success. There is, however, considerable work of a routine nature which takes up much time, and it is often felt that assistance in this respect would leave time that could be utilized to better advantage in this important work.

I have again to place on record the able and efficient services of the Assistant Probation Officer and of the typist.

## REV. FRANK RULE, PROBATION OFFICER, CHRISTCHURCH.

During the year ended 31st March, 1925, the work of caring for the delinquents who find their way to our Courts has been continued with varying success. The men who take their probation seriously and co-operate with the Probation Officer are those who get the greatest benefit. Only a small percentage are troublesome and need severe measures. It is being more clearly recognized that the Probation Officer is the friend of those whom the Court puts in his care. This year I have two who formerly were in my care, and who have been brought under the gracious provisions of the 1920 Act for a second time. It is an interesting study in psychology to watch these men taking a grip of themselves and struggling to get on their feet. Just when men are burdened with the feeling that it is impossible for them to make good, then is the time the Probation Officer gets the chance to cheer them up and encourage them to keep on till a better day comes. When a man is married and has a family to support, if restitution is to be paid, then great patience has to be exercised. It is a very fine testimony to the judgment of those who administer our laws that so few fail to meet the financial obligation imposed upon them by the Court. I think I ought to report that in this probation district the Judge, Mr. Justice Adams, Mr. H. Y. Widdowson, the Stipendiary Magistrate, and his colleague Mr. W. Wilson, all give sympathetic consideration to any recommendation your officer makes. From these gentlemen I get much help and encouragement. From the Christchurch Citizens' Benevolent Association I get much help to tide many needy ones over their difficult times.

The following will show the numbers dealt with since last annual report: Reporting at the commencement of the year, 80; admitted to probation during the year, 71; transferred from other districts, 11: a total of 162. Forty-two completed their terms and were discharged; transferred to other districts, 18; defaulted, 3; convicted and sent to prison, 6; died, 1; remaining on reporting-list at end of year, 92.

## REV. F. G. CUMMING, GENERAL PROBATION OFFICER, DUNEDIN.

I have pleasure in submitting another annual report of the probationary work as carried on in the Dunedin district. The result of the past year has been in many respects very gratifying. The number placed on probation during the year has been greater than that of 1924 both with regard to first offenders and those released upon probation by the Prison Board. It is pleasing to state that the year's work has been most satisfactory. I find that quite a number of the men whose probationary period has ceased still desire to keep in touch with the Probation Officer, seeking his help and advice in many matters.

Then, it is pleasing to record the great assistance and encouragement I receive from Mr. Justice Sim and the two Stipendiary Magistrates, Messrs. J. R. Bartholomew and H. W. Bundle. This also applies to the police and Court officials, who give me the greatest assistance and take a kindly interest in my work as Probation Officer. This you will understand is decidedly encouraging to me.

I think I should make special mention of the young probationers released from the Borstal Institution, where there is no doubt they receive excellent training, and as a result come out to face the world of temptation and old companions with new ideals; and it is marvellous to see how these young fellows rise up in many instances to fill positions of trust and honour. I would like to state, and do so without hesitation, that the shepherding of these young men is a great privilege, and it is very satisfactory to the Probation Officer to see them carry out, as they mostly do, the terms of their release upon probation.

One thing I would strongly recommend is that the advice of the Probation Officer might be sought before some of these young men are released, as to whether it is advisable for them to be returned to their homes or the district where they got into trouble. It must be remembered that many of them come from homes that are decidedly anything but helpful to a young man making a restart in life.

In past years I have spoken highly of the probationary system, and as the days go by my conviction becomes strengthened in the fact that it is a magnificent chance given to these young men to make good.

Another matter worth recording is that there is not much difficulty in placing these young men in very satisfactory positions. The days when an ex-prisoner was set an impossible task to retrieve himself are gone, for in the prison system of to-day there is given the great ideal of hope, and this means much, for as a man comes to the Probation Officer he knows that everything within reason will be done to further create the hope which came to him in prison. He is helped back to honest employment and a real fellowship with the community. We should never forget the fact that there is good in every man if only we readily seek it, and this the Probation Officer endeavours to do.

It was necessary during the year to cancel several licenses for breach of probation, but this has been the exception and not the rule.

One last word, and it is this: Our probation system is humane, helpful, and reformative.

## MR. C. G. I. POLLOCK, GENERAL PROBATION OFFICER, INVERCARGILL.

I have the honour to submit the following report on the operations of the Offenders Probation Act for the year ended the 31st March, 1925.

During the year under review the work has progressed steadily, and full advantage has been taken of the beneficent provisions of the Probation Act by both the Supreme and the Magistrates' Courts. In the majority of cases those admitted to probation plainly show by their actions full appreciation of the sympathetic treatment meted out to them by the Courts; and the results obtained demonstrate that the course adopted has been in the right direction.

In dealing with human nature with all its frailties accentuated it is hardly to be expected that endeavours after reclamation should show 100 per cent. of success. There have been failures; but when the past history of every individual listed on the register is known, it becomes surprising that so many of them have made good despite their handicaps. The few who did not rise to the opportunity offered them were those whose chances were overweighted by their antecedents. Thus, one of the defaulters had grown up in an unfavourable environment, had entered on a criminal career at an early

age, and in consequence had already spent some years in a State institution. He again gravitated into his wonted associations and became uncontrollable, so that there was no alternative but to have him sent where he would be under strict discipline. When, however, it can be affirmed that only 6 per cent. have turned out failures, the justification of the probation system is notably upheld.

It has become the practice of the Courts in nearly all cases where a person has defrauded another to insist that full restitution be made during the period of probation. The wisdom of adopting such a course is shown in the following example: A young woman was ordered to make restitution of a sum which to her was of some magnitude. The obligation thus imposed upon her, besides its practical lesson of insistence on righting the wrong, proved indirectly a factor in restoring her to normal status in the community. In order to discharge the debt at the earliest possible date she supplemented her weekly wages by what could be earned from needlework done in spare moments. By this means full restitution was made about six months before the due date. The stimulus of returning self-respect quickened her endeavours to make a stepping-stone of the past; other interests came into her life binding her more strongly to her better purposes; she is now happily settled in a home of her own. In this instance at any rate there is good promise that the humane provision which spared the ignominy of incarceration has retrieved the after-career from what might otherwise have been a downward course. In another instance a young man was given the opportunity of redeeming himself from the consequences of a false step, and the results so far are gratifying indeed. Before he could be properly placed a good deal of time and effort had to be expended to that purpose. The desired opportunity came at last, and to-day this young man fills with credit a position commensurate with his marked abilities. He, too, is in hopeful accord with that part of his treatment which insists that he contribute a substantial portion of his earnings to restore what was not his own. It is a minor consideration, but not to be overlooked, that the injured party could not have been repaid had imprisonment been given.

In these days, when so much attention is directed to the intellectual and moral interests of the rising generation, the contributing causes which lead a certain percentage of young people into misdemeanour and crime are worth tracing with a view to removing such causes if that should be practicable.

*Crimes Amendment Act Probationers.*—In this category a different type of offender presents a more difficult problem to whatever agency undertakes to foster reform efforts. Delinquency has gone further than in the previous class; there is a worse bondage to the habits and propensities that have led to law-breaking. The delinquent, just released from penal detention and resolving to redeem himself, has a long, stern conflict to maintain not only with his own insidious atavistic tendencies, which will continue to dog his steps, but also with external discouragements. A helpful humanitarian attitude towards the erring brother-man will not meet him on every hand; unhappily, some real ostracism will test his will and his purpose. But that hindrance is apt to be magnified by his own self-conscious thoughts of the slur he bears: he is unduly apprehensive of mistrust and of obstinate antipathy on the part of the people amongst whom he is supposed to be given a chance to re-create his character and his reputation.

In view of these hindering conditions it is gratifying to be able to report favourably. Very satisfactory indeed has been the conduct of those who, by the good record maintained while under institutional discipline, have merited an opportunity being given by the Prisons Board of regaining their personal liberty, the deprivation of which, even for a brief period, is dire punishment for the average human being.

There is a class of probationer whose case calls for special remark: I refer to those delinquents who, for excellent reasons, have to be denied release by the Prisons Board until the maximum sentence has almost expired. The term during which these remain under supervision is too brief to be of effect; they receive full liberty before they have given practical evidence that they are fitted to exercise its privileges. To illustrate the point, a case may be instanced in which the probation period covered only a few months. The individual referred to was at first by no means amenable, and took some time to settle down to duty and a regularly ordained life. Eventually, however, the role of a willing worker was apparently cheerfully accepted, and the employer's testimony was so definitely favourable that success seemed to have been obtained. But, one week before expiry of the term of probation, the the willing worker became indolent and insolent, finally giving the employer notice to quit at the end of the week, and adding the significant remark, "I can then do as I like." To meet the needs of such cases, provision might be made to extend the period of probation beyond the date of expiry of the original sentence passed by the Court.

The indeterminate principle might, indeed, be generally applied to advantage. For, while a certain minimum duration of probation would be necessary to be of any avail, it is difficult to predetermine the needs of each case. There are those who respond to the efforts made on their behalf and who gladly keep in touch with the Probation Officer, conscious that their improving record will commend itself. For some of these earlier release from official supervision might be decreed, it being still open to them to seek advice and friendly offices in case of need. There are others less promising in their whole attitude, less dependable in their will to reform. It would appear desirable that these should be subject to repeated extensions of their probation at the discretion of the Board, acting upon reports furnished. There is no doubt that authoritative supervision affords support that may turn the issue where, owing to slackness of will and the pressure of inveterate habits, the risk of relapse is imminent.

#### REV. O. BLUNDELL, NEW PLYMOUTH.

I have the honour to report that twenty-two probationers have been under my charge during the year. Of these, four completed their term of probation, nine were transferred to other districts, two broke the terms of their probation and are undergoing periods of imprisonment, one died in hospital, and six are still reporting themselves to me.

Generally speaking, there is a manifest desire on the part of those who have been under my charge to make the best use of the opportunity afforded them, and I am very hopeful, in the case of most, that they will continue to act as reputable citizens.

## MR. T. P. MILLS, PROBATION OFFICER, WELLINGTON.

There were 78 offenders on the register at the beginning of the year; 66 were placed on probation, 48 were transferred from other districts, 192 in all passing through my hands during the year. Forty-five completed the period of probation satisfactorily, 45 were transferred to other districts, 3 left the Dominion permanently, 1 was discharged by the Prisons Board, 6 were imprisoned, and 5 were re-admitted to probation for subsequent criminal offences, and 6 were punished for minor breaches of probation. Ninety-nine probationers were on the register at the end of the year. Of those who lapsed only one received a lengthy term of imprisonment—viz., two years' reformatory detention—and has therefore been written off the register; not one of the remainder received a longer sentence than three months, and all these will continue to report on their release from prison. It is noteworthy that in most of these cases probation was not recommended at their original offence, the Court having extended this leniency with a good deal of hesitation. Practically all the rest were confined to transfers from other districts. There are several defaulting probationers, however, that the police have failed to locate. They are not included in the above-mentioned defaulters.

The percentage of actual failures show an increase on last year's favourable returns. It would be of interest to trace the after-career of those who have conducted themselves satisfactorily during the term of probation. Probably the majority do not transgress again, but to my knowledge there are quite a number who have not stood the further test of time.

It is obvious that the observation of these offenders only during the limited period of probation does not correctly represent the value of probation as a reformatory agency. In any case the whole system in my opinion is capable of improved methods. Probation has come to stay—it is essential, therefore, that we should progress towards perfection.

The number of lapses would be reduced by the elimination of very doubtful cases, especially those not recommended by the Probation Officer; severer penalties for breaches of the conditions of probation; reports to be furnished on all cases where there are no previous convictions; a limited number of probationers to each Probation Officer; the appointment of honorary assistant Probation Officers; and a judicious increase in the amount of money allocated for the support of the system. In view of the great saving effected by keeping these men out of prison, running as it does well into five figures, the important influence also on the well-being of the community, which latter should probably have the first place, the present expenditure can hardly be considered adequate.

Of those who completed the term of probation satisfactorily, some have made very praiseworthy efforts to win through. It is far from an easy battle—the difficulty in obtaining suitable situations, the co-existent trouble to rehabilitate oneself in reputable circles inflicts a heavy penalty for wrongdoing. Farm-work perhaps affords more openings than any other avenue of labour, but that is more skilled than the average man generally allows. It is comparatively easy to place an experienced youth on a farm, but the unskilled man is a problem. There are large numbers of our young men badly equipped for these emergencies, and it contributes largely to their downfall. It is an exception to find a good tradesman before the Court for any offence. Of the 190-odd men who passed through my hands only 12 had any real knowledge of skilled work. In this connection I would welcome any step to extend school age to make that possible. The recruiting-ground of the criminal is from the mentally dull and stupid, and it is pleasing to see that special tuition is being given to help these. Skill with the hands is of infinitely more importance to the community and to this class of individual than ability to colour a map or work out a fraction sum. It is along these lines that a great advance will be made in coping with the criminal problem. Probation is good, the Borstal Institution is good; under existing circumstances both are invaluable, and both doubtless will continue for all time; but to be properly equipped to meet the pitfalls of life is the most urgent obligation of the State to the youth of to-day. Apart from the higher ideals of the Christian faith, salvation is through work, and skilled work.

## REPORTS OF WOMEN PROBATION OFFICERS.

## MRS. R. GLOVER, WELLINGTON.

In submitting my annual report for the Wellington District for female offenders, I desire to say that the work for the past year has been most successful.

I cannot speak too highly of the assistance of our Judges, Magistrates, Court officials, and police officers, who are ever ready to grant the benefits of the Probation Act to deserving cases, which means that the stain of being sent to prison is avoided. The offenders under the Probation Act are allowed to go to their homes, and under the influence of their parents, whose counsel they no longer disregard: this in many instances gives the probationers greater respect for them. Reporting is no hardship, but, on the contrary, the young woman looks forward to coming to see her Probation Officer, and in the quiet of the little room many weaknesses are confessed, and one has abundant opportunity of giving loving counsel and advice, which has helped to tide many feet over the slippery places. It is quite cheering to receive letters of appreciation from those who have been helped. Only recently I received one, saying how much my little talks were appreciated, and that they had been the means of making the writer a more thoughtful girl instead of a thoughtless one, and how much stronger she felt in herself to resist temptation, and she was constantly thinking what she could do to improve herself for the future.

I wish to further state that since my appointment as Woman Probation Officer (I was the first appointed in New Zealand), with the exception of three probationers, not one has been before the Court for a second offence. This speaks admirably for the system.

The Crimes Amendment Act deals with quite a different type: many have offended often, serving several sentences for different offences. Numbers of these are excellent workers and get good wages; several have been in the same situations for two or three years, and are banking their money.

It is very creditable to the Prisons Department, the manner in which it is endeavouring to help lift the underworld of society. Much of the present system is due to the increasing labours and strong humane sympathy for the "down-and-outs" of the late Controller-General of Prisons, Mr. C. E. Matthews, who was suddenly called home to his reward. He will be remembered by numbers for many years to come for his timely and kindly acts.

## MRS. ANNIE GORDON, AUCKLAND.

I beg to submit my first annual report on the working of the Offenders Probation Act. As this is my first report since taking over the work, I will give the numbers dealt with since 1921: The total number dealt with to the end of March of this year is eighty-five. During the past year thirty have been admitted to probation; these, with fifty-three who were on the register, and two received on transfer, show that eighty-five have been under my care. One probationer was transferred, and two received, leaving fifty-four reporting at the 1st April, 1925.

These are the figures; but I desire to show something of what lies behind the bare numbers given. Let me record first of all that I am fully convinced of the great value of the Offenders Probation Act, and can testify to the success of its working in the majority of the cases that have come under my care. Full success has not been attained in every case, and it can be readily understood that much time and care is involved in dealing with some of the young women who are admitted to probation. The majority, however, have shown great appreciation of probation, and of the efforts put forth on their behalf to assist them to make good.

I have found that the chief causes resulting in the appearance of these offenders before the Court has been indulgence in drink, smoking, stealing, and the cheap dance-rooms, and in many cases the absence, in varying degrees, of parental control. The offenders being admitted to probation, and coming under the care of the Probation Officer, come under that control and guidance which has been lacking, and which was all that was required to keep them from further lapses. It has indeed been gratifying to have so many expressions of appreciation from probationers for the efforts made in assisting them to rehabilitate themselves. It has often been just the kindly interest shown that has been the incentive to better things.

From my long and varied experience of work amongst women, and the bad results in so many cases where young offenders have been sent to prison, I feel that the probation work is a success, despite the few that have failed to make good. The making of restitution is one of the greatest things in the probation system.

## MISS HANNAH L. COOMBS, DUNEDIN.

It is with pleasure I report to you on the work entrusted to me. As Probation Officer only my duties are not heavy, but as Police Court Officer I devote every morning to assisting in any and every way possible.

Only one female released on probation had to be brought before the Magistrate to receive sentence during the year; not one failed to pay restitution in the time specified; while five have married, are comfortably settled and doing really well; two others have just become engaged. These girls do not call on me only to report, but to confide their joys or their sorrows. I study to find congenial environment and employment for the different types and temperaments.

As Probation Officer I am always in attendance at the Supreme Court sittings as long as female witnesses are to attend Court. His Honour is always particularly gracious when I have had occasion to report to him.

In conclusion, I must say I have to thank the Magistrate and officials for the courtesy and consideration shown; never have I sought their advice or assistance without a ready and cheerful response.

## OFFENDERS PROBATION ACT.

## AGES AND TERMS OF PROBATION OF THE OFFENDERS ADMITTED TO PROBATION DURING YEAR 1924.

Age, in Years.	Six Months or under.	One Year.	Eighteen Months.	Two Years.	Three Years.	Four Years.	Five Years.	Total.
10 and under 15 ..	2	..	1	2	..	..	..	5
15 .. 20 ..	8	62	8	63	40	1	1	183
20 .. 25 ..	5	53	4	56	26	..	1	145
25 .. 30 ..	6	24	3	27	17	..	..	77
30 .. 40 ..	4	32	2	49	14	1	..	102
40 .. 50 ..	4	12	1	25	11	..	1	54
50 .. 70 ..	2	8	..	4	4	..	..	18
70 and over ..	1	..	..	1	..	..	..	2
Totals ..	32	191	19	227	112	2	3	586

## SUMMARY OF CASES DEALT WITH DURING YEAR 1924.

	Admitted to Probation.	Deferred Sentence.	Total.
Number reporting on 1st January, 1924 .. ..	929	43	972
Admitted to probation during 1924 .. ..	586	73	659
Totals .. ..	1,515	116	1,631
Completed probation during year .. ..	463	37	500
Deceased .. ..	3	..	3
Left the Dominion .. ..	5	..	5
Committed to an industrial school .. ..	1	..	1
Serving term of imprisonment .. ..	44	..	44
Discharged by Prisons Board .. ..	18	2	20
Totals .. ..	534	39	573
Reporting on 31st December, 1924 .. ..	981	77	1,058

## BREACHES OF CONDITIONS OF RELEASE COMMITTED BY OFFENDERS WHO WERE GRANTED PROBATION DURING 1924.

Failed to report, &c. .. .. .	15
Committed further offences .. .. .	21
Absconded and not yet traced .. .. .	7
<b>Total .. .. .</b>	<b>43</b>
Percentage of successful cases .. .. .	92.66

## COSTS OF PROSECUTION AND RESTITUTION-MONEYS COLLECTED DURING YEAR 1924.

Amount of costs of prosecution collected by Probation Officers .. .. .	£	s.	d.
Amount of restitution-money collected .. .. .	745	9	9
	3,547	3	2
<b>Total .. .. .</b>	<b>£4,292</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>11</b>

## OFFENCES FOR WHICH OFFENDERS RECEIVED BENEFITS OF PROBATION ACT DURING YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER, 1924.

	Admitted to Probation.	Deferred Sentence.	Total.
Theft .. .. .	367	28	395
Breaking, entering, and theft .. .. .	40	..	40
Robbery .. .. .	1	..	1
False pretences .. .. .	52	3	55
Receiving stolen property .. .. .	9	..	9
Wilful damage .. .. .	7	2	9
Mischief .. .. .	5	4	9
Unlawful conversion of property .. .. .	13	1	14
Offences against postal regulations .. .. .	1	..	1
Forgery .. .. .	18	..	18
Perjury .. .. .	1	1	2
Arson .. .. .	2	..	2
Obscene language .. .. .	8	2	10
Common assault .. .. .	11	7	18
Assault causing actual bodily harm .. .. .	3	..	3
Indecent assault .. .. .	1	..	1
Indecent exposure .. .. .	6	1	7
Vagrancy .. .. .	8	7	15
Prostitution .. .. .	1	..	1
Drunk while in charge of a vehicle .. .. .	6	..	6
Attempted suicide .. .. .	2	7	9
Impairing security .. .. .	1	..	1
Bigamy .. .. .	1	1	2
Wife-desertion .. .. .	1	..	1
Carnal knowledge .. .. .	3	..	3
Attempted carnal knowledge .. .. .	1	..	1
Concealment of birth .. .. .	1	..	1
Grossly indecent act .. .. .	..	2	2
Making a false declaration .. .. .	6	..	6
Fraudulent bankruptcy .. .. .	1	..	1
Breach of Gaming Act .. .. .	1	..	1
Sly-grog selling .. .. .	1	..	1
Dangerously discharging firearms .. .. .	1	..	1
In possession of unregistered firearms .. .. .	2	1	3
Unlawfully on premises .. .. .	1	4	5
Drunkenness .. .. .	2	2	4
Obstructing the police .. .. .	1	..	1
<b>Totals .. .. .</b>	<b>586</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>659</b>

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