

The personal touch carries a great influence, but the practice of requiring probationers to report themselves at the Probation Office—which is the usual practice in New Zealand—has several disadvantages. Probationers come to regard such reporting as a mere matter of form, and the fact of reporting at the office once a week is no criterion of conduct at other times. Where probationers are working during the day, reports are arranged for in the evenings, and with several reporting on the same evening there is the objectionable feature that small coteries of a delinquent class are liable to be formed, with the danger of anti-social habits becoming intensified rather than being eradicated.

In Britain and in America it has been found that the most effective probation work lies in home visiting. An English authority states: "Where considered practicable, the Probation Officer should visit the home, where more information may be gathered in one visit than from a dozen reporting in groups. The officer should make personal visits to the home . . . he can consult and perhaps secure the co-operation of the parents, wives, relatives, and neighbours, or others whom he may induce to take an interest in the probationer. These visits furnish an opportunity of studying the environment and conditions under which the probationer is situated. By doing constructive work in the home he can remove or better the conditions which are dangerous to his probationer's welfare."

In advocating personal visitation by the Probation Officer, care must be taken to ensure that the probationer is not prejudiced in the eyes of his employers or associates through the Probation Officer visiting the probationer at his daily work. There should be no objection, however, to discreet inquiries being made as to whether the nature of the occupation which the probationer is following is such as to hinder his development along social lines. Care should always be exercised to ensure that the probationer is neither humiliated nor embarrassed in the eyes of his fellow-workers or associates.

It is important that full use should be made of existing social agencies. The Probation Officer is but a passing agent in the probationer's life, not a permanent one. He should therefore endeavour to put his charges in touch with such permanent social and religious agencies as are appropriate to their individual needs, in the hope that these agencies will continue to influence the probationer's life long after the probationary period has terminated.

As it is impossible for the present part-time officers—particularly in the four principal centres of the Dominion—to give the close individual attention that the foregoing method of treatment would involve, it will be necessary to seek the aid of suitable voluntary workers, and form a committee to co-operate with them.

It would be an improvement if the Dominion were divided into four special probation districts, and if a full-time Probation Officer were appointed for each district, to be located in the four principal centres, and each responsible for the organization of his particular district. It should be the duty of the Probation Officer to form associate committees of suitable social workers, representative of all classes of the community and the various religious denominations, so that appropriate individual attention can be given to each offender and ensure that he be subject to the influence and guidance of one of his own faith. This proposal would obviate certain objections that now exist, and would make for the permanent linking-up with social organizations, and constitute a tie that would no doubt lessen the likelihood of future lapses into crime. In this connection a prominent cleric stated: "If you can arrange things so that as soon as the child—or the adult, for that matter—is put upon probation he is to be in accord with the proper religious authorities, you will have done much towards the solution of crime in our time."

A committee would relieve the Probation Officer of a considerable amount of personal work. It is generally agreed that sixty cases are the maximum that one man can effectively deal with and permit of thorough individualization (*i.e.*, personal study of the offender), but by working through a committee defects incurred through overburdening would be overcome. Voluntary organizations have been found to work satisfactorily in other parts of the world, and there is no reason why successful co-operation on such lines should not be secured in the Dominion. This branch of social work—the restoration of the offender to a sense of normal citizenship—is of the nature that should appeal to all who have a high sense of public duty.

The following statement by Sir E. Ruggles Brise, in regard to the operation of the system in England, shows convincingly that the probation system is worthy of whole-hearted support: "Definite probation results are impossible to ascertain, but it is possible to declare that there has been through its operation a large financial saving in the maintenance of penal institutions, for the cost of maintenance of the probation system is but a small fraction of the net cost to care for the same number in confinement, while prevention of waste in productive power, and the public burden of supporting dependants of imprisoned convicts is of still greater economic value; and the results to society by reformation of offenders in a large proportion of cases are better than the results obtainable through prison sentences."

I desire to place on record appreciation of the ready and whole-hearted co-operation of the district Probation Officers, who in many instances have laboured long hours under difficult conditions. Considering all the circumstances under which the work is at present conducted, the results achieved must be regarded as satisfactory.

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