

Mr. J. GARBUTT, Probation Officer, Dunedin.

I have pleasure in submitting my third annual report on probation work in the Dunedin district, and append a statement setting out the numbers dealt with under their respective headings for the period ended 31st March, 1930.

First Offenders :—

|   |    |    |    |    |       |
|---|----|----|----|----|-------|
| Number on register at 1st April, 1929   | .. | .. | .. | .. | 69    |
| Admitted to probation by local Courts   | .. | .. | .. | .. | 43    |
| Received on transfer  | .. | .. | .. | .. | 13    |
|   |    |    |    |    | — 125 |
| Less—   |    |    |    |    |       |
| Discharged on completion of period  | .. | .. | .. | .. | 47    |
| Transferred to other places   | .. | .. | .. | .. | 22    |
| Dealt with by Courts on original or subsequent offences and removed from register | .. | .. | .. | .. | 6     |
| Absconders  | .. | .. | .. | .. | 2     |
| Discharged by Prisons Board   | .. | .. | .. | .. | 4     |
| Left Dominion   | .. | .. | .. | .. | 1     |
|   |    |    |    |    | — 82  |
| Leaving on register at 31st March, 1930   | .. | .. | .. | .. | 43    |

Releasees from institutional control :—

|   |    |    |    |    |      |
|---|----|----|----|----|------|
| Number on register at 1st April, 1929     | .. | .. | .. | .. | 10   |
| Released on license during year           | .. | .. | .. | .. | 23   |
| Received on transfer                      | .. | .. | .. | .. | 3    |
|   |    |    |    |    | — 36 |
| Less—                                     |    |    |    |    |      |
| Discharged on completion of sentence      | .. | .. | .. | .. | 12   |
| Transferred to other places               | .. | .. | .. | .. | 6    |
| Returned to institutions on other charges | .. | .. | .. | .. | 1    |
| Licenses cancelled                        | .. | .. | .. | .. | 2    |
| Committed to Seacliff Mental Hospital     | .. | .. | .. | .. | 1    |
|   |    |    |    |    | — 22 |
| Leaving on register at 31st March, 1930   | .. | .. | .. | .. | 14   |

Restitution—rightly regarded as one of the moral props of the probationary system—amounting to £171 18s. 6d., and £98 7s. 8d. costs of prosecution, have been collected during the year and represent an individual effort and self-denial of the utmost value in the stabilizing of weak, improvident characters in the habits of self-respect and thrift. No lesson so completely demonstrates to the average probationer's mind the futility of wrongdoing as when he is called upon to repay by gradual instalments the loss caused to another person through his folly or vice.

It was necessary to bring several defaulters before the Courts on charges of failure to comply with the conditions of their release, and in most cases the punishment meted out proved sufficient to impress them with a sense of responsibility towards their obligations.

In comparison with previous years the numbers of those admitted to probation show a slight decline. This is not accountable to a corresponding fall in the criminal statistics or to the fear that probation as a reformative measure has lost favour with the Courts, but rather, I would suggest, to the difficult and frequently chronic nature of the offences dealt with, together with a proper discrimination in preserving the benefits of probation for those whose efforts are likely to prove reasonably successful.

As mentioned in my previous reports the unemployment problem continues to react adversely to the success of probation, but often the very failure to secure immediate employment on release by the Courts has served to strengthen the bond between the probationer and officer, which, when culminated by success, has outlasted the official period and brought about a mutual appreciation of the difficulties to be overcome.

The scarcity of unskilled work in the city has made it necessary for several of the younger and, incidentally, more frivolous type of probationer being called upon to take up employment at public-work camps, &c., in remote country districts where they are invariably thrown into contact with adverse company, and, having lost the steady influence of direct control, return in due course showing little, if any, progress towards true reform.

I am thoroughly convinced that if probation has to be made to substitute detention, the control exercised must essentially be in the nature of close individual contact, with all the understanding and co-operation from interested parties than can be brought to bear.

Despite the fact that probation as a remedial and humanitarian measure has long since passed the innovation stage, there yet remains a rather widespread and lamentable misconception of its purpose and benefits.

Until it becomes more generally and seriously realized that it is something more constructive in effect and less of a judicial gesture equivalent to the offender being let off, the work will remain shorn of its rightful appreciation as a character-building process, beneficial alike to the individual and to society of which he is an integrant unit.