

7. A word of commendation is certainly due to the Probation Officers, who, without extra remuneration, have spared no pains to make the necessary investigations as regards probable first offenders. They have, besides, shown considerable and praiseworthy discretion in their recommendations, which have been almost invariably adopted by the various Courts.

8. Similar Acts to the New Zealand First Offenders' Probation Act have now been placed on the statute-books of the United Kingdom and Queensland, and the Act is likely to be immediately adopted in Victoria and New South Wales. It is generally admitted that the statute contains the germs of valuable legislation by assisting in the effort to do something to convert those who have committed a first offence, perhaps from thoughtlessness or under the influence of strong temptation, into honest and useful members of society, instead of, by imprisonment, turning them into habitual criminals.

9. The chief danger to be guarded against is the idea that a person might deliberately commit a crime for the first time with the certainty, if detected, of suffering no further punishment than being placed on probation, with an opportunity of absconding, but the fact of only one person out of 121 having succeeded in getting away virtually disposes of any such supposed danger; and, when it is further considered that fifty-eight first offenders have actually come back to society without being subjected to the contamination of prison influences, such a result must be recognised as most gratifying, and will prove a valuable aid in removing the stigma of the original conviction in those cases where an intention has been shown to do better in future.

10. It has been said that one effect of the Probation Act is to place offenders under police supervision, which in many cases, such as to a person of good education and connections committing a small fraud or embezzlement of no great amount, seems quite inapplicable and calculated to do harm; but, from the satisfactory way in which the provisions of the Act are carried out in New Zealand, this argument is of little force, and, so far as is known, no complaint has been made of the result.

I have, &c.,

A. HUME,

Inspector of Prisons.

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