

PAROLE

Probation Officers, in addition to dealing with persons who are admitted to probation by the Courts direct in lieu of being sentenced to imprisonment, also have the responsibility for the supervision and after-care of prisoners who have been released on probationary licence. This work of rehabilitation is regarded as a most important integral part of the penal plan. Too much emphasis cannot be given to the importance of supervision during the difficult period when the released prisoner is endeavouring to readjust himself to social conditions. In several of the city districts voluntary Probation Committees were recently revived, and it is hoped that it will be practicable in the near future to organize a Dominion-wide after-care organization with a view to giving greater attention to the oversight of the younger offenders, too many of whom experience difficulty in readjusting themselves to the community. They get in with bad associations and often drift back into crime. For example, although the total average relapses of Borstal cases throughout the Dominion is less than 20 per cent., it is noticeable that the younger lads do not do as well as the older ones who seem to have passed through the unstable adolescent stage. Approximately one-third of the lads released from the junior Borstal at Invercargill "fail to make the grade" and get into difficulties again after release. No Maori lad is now released from Borstal without the Maori Welfare Officer of the district to which he is going being advised so that the necessary oversight may be arranged.

The general results of the parole supervision work may be gauged from the following statistics, which show that during the year under review 567 persons were released on probation on the recommendation of the Prisons Board: 7 parolees were recommitted for breaches of their licence, and 27, including 7 habitual criminals, had their licence cancelled for further offences. During the five-year period ended 31st December, 1947, 1,734 persons (excluding habitual criminals) were released on probation, and during that period 202, or 11.6 per cent., were returned to prison for failing to comply with the conditions of their licence, or for other offences committed whilst on licence, and 27.9 per cent. only were again convicted subsequent to discharge, which, considering the refractory nature of some of the material dealt with, may be regarded as fairly satisfactory.

APPRECIATION

I desire to place on record the Department's appreciation of the helpful co-operation of the Magistrates who have undertaken the chairmanship of the Voluntary Probation Committees, and to the members of the various Committees and societies that have assisted in the care of discharged prisoners and probationers.

Especial thanks are due to the Salvation Army, and to the Women's Borstal Association, which for twenty years now has rendered a truly wonderful service in assisting in the reclamation and rehabilitation of Borstal girls.

I wish to express my personal thanks to the Probation Officers, including the police officers who deal with probation work in the smaller towns, and to the Head Office staff engaged on probation work, to all of whom the success of the probation work is largely due.

B. L. DALLARD,
Chief Probation Officer.
