

REPORTS OF DISTRICT PROBATION OFFICERS

Mr. C. E. MAXTED, District Probation Officer, Auckland

At the beginning of the year there were 222 probationers reporting, 249 were released upon probation by the Courts, and 119 were transferred from other districts, making a total of 590 dealt with during the year. Of these, 127 satisfactorily completed the period of probation, 168 were transferred to other districts, 33 left the Dominion, 2 were committed to mental hospital, 4 absconded, and 29 were committed to prison for terms which exceeded the period of probation, leaving 227 on the register at the end of the year.

For the period 1st April, 1947, to 31st March, 1948, the sum of £1,162 14s. 10d. was collected for restitution and £464 1s. 10d. for costs of prosecution, making a total of £1,626 16s. 8d. This amount is an increase of £228 14s. 2d. on the amount collected for the previous year and reflects the present abundance of work available and the high wages being earned by the younger generation. Unfortunately, however, many of the youths on probation show little inclination to save, and to meet this need many more probationers than was the case last year have been made to open banking accounts either in their names or in the joint names of the Probation Officer and themselves. A set amount is required to be banked each week, and the bank-book is inspected when each report is made.

Twenty-seven individuals were dealt with under the Summary Penalties Act and all satisfactorily completed the payment of fines and costs imposed by the Court. The majority of the fines were for comparatively small amounts, but the provisions of this Act are more than justifying themselves as youths on low wages find it easier to pay a small weekly sum than to find the full amount of a fine in a limited space of time.

Ship-deserters still present a major problem to the Court here, and the 57 persons who were admitted to probation were only a small proportion of the total number who appeared before the Court on that charge. Of the 33 persons who left New Zealand during the period under review, 29 were ship-deserters who joined overseas ships in compliance with the terms of their release on probation.

The following figures are submitted in respect of those released from Borstals or prisons under the Prevention of Crime and the Crimes Amendment Acts: at the commencement of the year 90 were reporting, 176 were received direct from institutions, and 52 were transferred from other districts, making a total of 318 who passed through my hands during the year. Of these, 94 completed the term of probation, 61 were transferred to other districts, 5 left the Dominion, 3 were discharged by the Prisons Board, 1 was committed to mental hospital, 1 absconded, and 42 were recommitted to prison, leaving 111 reporting at the close of the year.

Employment is still plentiful, and probationers have every opportunity of securing work giving good remuneration and a greater degree of permanency than has been the case for many years. Unfortunately, however, many fail to take full advantage of the position and continue to drift from job to job. This has always been the case with many of those appearing before the Courts. They lack stability and the self-discipline required to carry on in the face of difficulties.

During the year under review it has again been most encouraging to receive from employers a number of offers of employment for probationers and while it is realized that there is a shortage on the labour market the awakening of the public conscience to the necessity for members of the community to take their share in the rehabilitation of persons who have come into conflict with the law must have beneficial effects in later years.