

1948
NEW ZEALAND

PRISONS BOARD

(ANNUAL REPORT OF) FOR 1947

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

The Hon. Sir ARCHIBALD BLAIR, Kt. (President); Sir DONALD MCGAVIN, Kt., C.M.G., D.S.O., M.D. (London), F.R.C.S. (Eng.); B. L. DALLARD, Esq., C.M.G.; THEO. G. GRAY, Esq., C.M.G., M.B., M.P.C.; and ERNEST EDRIIDGE, Esq. (Sir ARCHIBALD BLAIR retired in February, 1948, and the Hon. Mr. Justice FINLAY was appointed in his place.)

10th June, 1948.

SIR,—

I have the honour to forward herewith the report of the Prisons Board for the year 1947.

I have, &c.,

G. P. FINLAY, J.,

President.

The Hon. the Minister of Justice.

REPORT OF THE PRISONS BOARD

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER, 1947

THE Board has to report that during the year it visited each of the prisons, prison camps, and Borstal institutions in the Dominion. It dealt with a total of 1,047 cases at fifteen meetings held in Wellington and at the various institutions.

The following summary gives details of the cases considered and the decisions arrived at:—

CASES DEALT WITH		BOARD'S DECISIONS	
Persons undergoing Borstal detention ..	352	Recommended for release on probation ..	189
		Recommended for discharge ..	Nil
		Deferred for later consideration ..	160
		Applications declined ..	3
	352		352
Persons sentenced to reformatory detention	409	Recommended for release on probation ..	229
		Recommended for discharge ..	2
		Deferred for later consideration ..	172
		Applications declined ..	6
	409		409
Persons sentenced to hard labour ..	232	Recommended for release on probation ..	165
		Recommended for discharge ..	3
		Deferred for later consideration ..	58
		Applications declined ..	6
	232		232
Habitual criminals for release or remission of head sentence ..	35	Recommended for release on probation ..	13
		Recommended for remission of head sentence ..	2
		Deferred for later consideration ..	18
		Applications declined ..	2
	35		35
Probationers under Crimes Amendment Act	6	Recommended for discharge ..	5
		Deferred for later consideration ..	Nil
		Applications declined ..	1
	6		6
Probationers under Offenders Probation Act	13	Discharge granted ..	11
		Modification of terms of probation granted ..	Nil
		Deferred for later consideration ..	Nil
		Applications declined ..	2
	13		13

As you are aware, Sir, for the whole of the period covered by this report the Hon. Sir Archibald Blair was President of the Board. Sir Archibald occupied that position from the 26th February, 1943, until his retirement as a Judge of the Supreme Court on 2nd February, 1948. At an earlier meeting of the Board reference was made to the Judge's impending retirement, appreciation being expressed of his unfailing courtesy and friendliness, and regret being felt at the loss of His Honour's wide experience in criminal matters. The Judge when responding said he considered the members of the Board were performing in an honorary capacity a very valuable and necessary public service both conscientiously and well, and, as he had discovered, frequently at considerable inconvenience to themselves.

I have, as already indicated, but recently assumed the office of President of the Prisons Board, and therefore do not propose to comment on the statistics for 1947, except to note that the satisfactory results shown by the statistics for previous years have continued to be maintained.

The ready co-operation of the Mental Hospitals Department has resulted in the Board being furnished whenever required with specialist reports on prisoners and inmates. These reports are of very valuable assistance to the Board in its deliberations. All inmates are examined by the Prison Medical Officers soon after their admission, and in any instance where the Medical Officer, the prison officials, or the Board at any time consider psychiatric treatment or advice would be beneficial, this is arranged.

The Board is also indebted to the various organizations and the many public-spirited citizens who give such splendid honorary service in the after-care of offenders. The friendly oversight, provision of suitable homes and/or employment, in certain difficult cases, are all-important factors in their rehabilitation.

The number of cases considered by the Board during 1947 was 1,047, or 6 more than the previous year; while the number in which the Board recommended a remission of sentence increased from 546 to 590.

If the 1947 statistics are compared with those of former reports it will be seen that the percentage of offenders who evidently make good has been maintained. Of the total number released on the recommendation of the Board after serving terms of Borstal detention and sentences of reformatory detention or hard labour, approximately 23 per cent. only have been reconvicted or failed to comply with the conditions of their release, while of the habitual criminals paroled since the Board was constituted in 1910, 59 per cent. have been returned to prison for non-compliance with the conditions of release or for further offences. Four persons who had proved their worthiness over a period of years in the community were recommended for complete discharge from the declaration as habitual criminal during the year.

In terms of the Offenders Probation Act, 1920, 13 probationers, as compared with 15 in the previous year, applied to the Board for respite from the conditions of their probation, on the grounds that they had complied with those exacting conditions over a long period and had become law-abiding citizens. Discharge was granted to 11 petitioners, and 2 applications were declined.

GENERAL

Since the Board commenced to function in 1911 no less than 35,867 cases have been considered by it. This includes prisoners undergoing sentences of reformatory detention, hard labour, habitual criminals, Borstal inmates, and probationers for discharge from probation or variation of terms thereof. Dealing with these cases under the particular headings, the results have been as follows:—

Reformatory Detention.—During the period from January, 1911, to December, 1947, 6,734 prisoners were sentenced to reformatory detention under the provisions of the Crimes Amendment Act, 1910. The number of cases that have been recommended for release or discharge is 5,480. In 725 cases prisoners were required to serve the full sentence imposed by the Court. Of the total number released after undergoing reformatory detention, 25·42 per cent. have been returned to prison either for non-compliance with the conditions of the release or for committing further offences, leaving approximately 75 per cent. who have not been convicted of any further offence.

Hard Labour.—Since the passing of the Statute Law Amendment Act, 1917, which extended the scope of the Prisons Board to the consideration of cases of prisoners sentenced to terms of imprisonment involving hard labour, 8,385 cases have been considered by the Board up to December, 1947. In 4,215 cases the prisoners were released on probation or discharged prior to expiry of the full time on the recommendation of the Board. Of this number, 2,774 completed probation satisfactorily, 299 were recommitted for other offences, and 65 were still reporting on probation at the 31st December, 1947, making approximately 67 per cent. who have not subsequently been reconvicted.

Habitual Criminals.—During the period from January, 1911, to December, 1947, 752 habitual criminals were released on licence on the recommendation of the Prisons Board. Of those so released, 59·3 per cent. were returned to prison either for committing further offences or for non-compliance with the conditions of probation. No further offences are recorded against the remaining 40·7 per cent.

Borstal Cases.—Since the coming into operation of the Prevention of Crime Act, 1924, 4,122 young persons have been detained under this Act, either by original commitments by the Court or by transference of youthful offenders from penal institutions or industrial schools. There have been 3,989 inmates released on the recommendation of the Board, 3,705 being on probation and 284 on the expiration of their sentence. Of the total number released, 2·80 per cent. have been returned to the institution for non-compliance with the conditions of release, 13·31 per cent. were recommitted for further offences whilst on probation, and 804, or approximately 20 per cent. of the total released, have been sentenced for offences committed after discharge or on expiry of their period of probation.

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