

This appreciation operates to inspire in the individual hope for the future and conduces to an acceptance of authority and a voluntary determination to maintain a proper standard of self-discipline. Both are vital factors in any enduring reformation.

In 581 cases the Board was able to recommend a remission of sentence. Statistics show that the operations of the Board continue to prove beneficial and successful, for the percentage of offenders who have not been reconvicted after release remains high. Approximately 24 per cent. only of those who have been released on the recommendation of the Board have been again convicted or have failed to comply with the conditions upon which they were released. Having regard to the general experience of recidivism here and abroad, the percentage of success thus indicated is very encouraging indeed.

Even in respect of habitual criminals, for whose ultimate reformation no great measure of hope can be entertained, the percentage of failures is not unduly high. Since the Board was established in 1910 only 59 per cent. of the habitual criminals released have been returned to prison upon conviction for further offences or for other reasons. As only those are declared habitual criminals in whom, from frequency of convictions, criminal habits would seem to have become fixed, any substantial percentage indicative of reformation must be regarded as satisfactory.

In this connection it is pleasing to be able to record that the Board was this year able to feel itself justified in recommending that 5 persons should be finally discharged from the category of habitual criminals. Such recommendations are only made where an individual after his release upon licence has proved, by sustained good conduct and industry over a number of years in the community, that he has rehabilitated himself.

Ten persons on probation, as against 13 in 1947, applied this year to the Board under the Offenders Probation Act, 1920, for some relief from the conditions of their probation. Such relief is only granted in meritorious cases. A discharge was granted to all 10 probationers.

Being constrained in the ordinary course of its work to study as closely and as intensively as is possible the history, character, and characteristics of every person committed to prison, the Board necessarily becomes conscious of any trends, whether subsisting or developing, in criminous conduct. One such subsisting trend is becoming increasingly noticeable. That is the tendency for what might be called petty offenders against the rights of property to be returned again and again to prison. Such offenders are generally guilty of false pretences upon a minor scale or thefts of property of small rather than great value.

This statement is, however, not exclusive, for such offenders are prone to every variety of offence involving dishonesty, but always upon a small scale. More than half the total receptions into prison and quite a number of those who otherwise come under the jurisdiction of the Board are recidivists of this type. These people are, as a rule, given relatively short sentences, upon the expiration of which they return to prey upon the community. As a means of correcting this state of affairs, the Board would like to suggest to those concerned with the sentencing of offenders of this type that recourse be had in proper cases to section 30, subsection (1), of the Crimes Act, 1908. That subsection reads:—

Where any person is convicted of any offence under sections 49 (49), 50 (51), 51 (52), or 52 (55) of the Police Offences Act, 1908, and either before or after the coming into operation of this Act has been previously convicted on at least six occasions of any offence mentioned in such sections (whether of the same description of offence or not), the Justice or Magistrate before whom the charge is heard, in addition to sentencing such person to any lawful term of imprisonment, may order that such person be brought before the Supreme Court or a Judge thereof to be dealt with as an habitual offender.