

Two hundred and sixty-eight, or slightly more than one-quarter (26 per cent.), of the total number of cases admitted to probation during 1948 were of persons under twenty years of age, and 595, or just over half the total (57 per cent.) were under twenty-five. In this connection it is of interest to observe that the question of crime by young persons has been occasioning concern in England during recent years, where there seems to have been a widespread disruption of moral standards as a post-war sequel. At a conference held in March of this year the Home Secretary, who convened the gathering, specially referred to this question of the declension of moral standards. In reference to the problem of combating this, he stated: "It was not merely a matter of scientific treatment. It was something beyond mere scientific formula." The Minister of Education stressed the importance of education having regard to the cultivation of moral and spiritual qualities as well as to the mental and physical development. The Archbishop of Canterbury referred to the gradual weakening of spiritual values as being responsible for the larger amount of juvenile delinquency, and the Archbishop of York stated that honesty and truthfulness were vanishing virtues. It is of interest to note that all the speakers, with one exception, and they represented practically every phase of social life, blamed the decline in spiritual values for the increase in delinquency. Bad housing, lack of playing-fields and recreation-grounds, lack of parental control, the films, mothers in industry, football pools, breakdown of marriage life—these, and all other reasons, were, in the minds of the speakers, all secondary to the lack of religious background.

Adding the number of probationers reporting on the 1st January, 1948, to the number of cases admitted during the year gives a total of 2,440 persons dealt with. The total number of actions taken during the year for breaches of conditions of probation was 207, or just over 8 per cent. of the aggregate number of persons dealt with. Seven hundred and ninety satisfactorily completed their probation or were discharged by the Prisons Board.

The amount collected by way of costs and restitution-money was £8,151, which is the largest amount so far collected in any one year. The aggregate amount collected under these headings since the inception of the scheme now totals £137,715. The obligation to make reparation, usually in small weekly instalments out of earnings, is often the beginning of a habit of saving. It also brings home to the probationer in a salutary and realistic manner just what his depredations have involved when expressed in terms of his own steady earnings.

Turning to the tables showing the nature of the offences dealt with, it will be noted that approximately 74 per cent. of the total persons admitted to probation during the year were for offences against property, 52 per cent. being for theft. Ninety-one persons were placed on probation for ship-desertion from overseas. Forty-eight, or 6 less than the number for the previous year, were granted probation for unlawful conversion of motor-cars. In this regard it is of interest to note the recent comments of the Director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons, United States of America. As the result of an investigation into the matter of the relationship between keys left in cars and automobile thefts, he states:—

It appears that as many as 4 out of every 5 thefts of parked automobiles would not occur if the ignitions of all unattended cars were locked and the keys were safely in their owner's pockets. We feel some concern for the inconvenience and money costs to owners and insurance companies of preventable automobile thefts. But we are far more concerned for the effect of such thefts upon the young men and boys who drive the cars away. Dozens of them are sentenced each year for their escapades. Other thousands who are not caught are encouraged in, perhaps actually initiated into criminal activity by these experiences. The moral for automobile owners is simple. Even if they are willing to chance losing their cars by leaving them unlocked, does not concern for the welfare of their fellow-men require that they lock their cars when they leave them.