

convicted of crime. Whether we should adopt the system which has been instituted in some of the States in America, or whether the habitual criminal should be prevented from breeding by being imprisoned for a part of his life, is a question which the people of this country must decide.

In 1917 the Statute Laws Amendment Act, by section 14, authorized the Board to deal with hard-labour cases, and the following table shows the number so dealt with since that date. It is too soon, however, to express an opinion as to the results effected by this provision :—

Table D.—Hard-labour Cases.

Total individual cases considered	..	..	..	..	..	93
Number released on recommendation of Board	..	..	..	..	..	15
Left with Expeditionary Forces	..	..	..	..	..	1
Completed probation	..	..	..	..	..	3
Reporting on probation	..	..	..	..	..	11

We find that we experience a certain amount of difficulty in dealing with cases brought under this section, and for the following reason: Supposing, for instance, that a man is sentenced to four years imprisonment with hard labour, and after serving two years of his sentence his case is referred for consideration. If the Board decides to release him it has power to fix his probationary period for a time equal only to the unexpired portion of his sentence, which in the example given would mean a period of eighteen months. The Board suggests that it should have the power to make the probationary period equal to, if necessary, double the length of the unexpired portion of the sentence—that is to say, in the example given, if a prisoner sentenced to four years were released at the end of two years, he could be placed under probation for four years. If the probation were broken and the prisoner returned to gaol, he would be bound to serve the two remaining years of his original sentence, subject to reduction, of course, if he earned marks for good conduct.

Cases in which the reformatory detention imposed is only for a period of twelve or eighteen months frequently come before the Board. If we were empowered to fix the probation as a period not exceeding double the unexpired portion of the sentence the prisoner would no doubt be released sooner than under the existing provisions; for, assuming that the sentence were twelve months, and that the Board saw fit to release him at the end of six months, his probationary period could then be fixed as twelve months, and, as has been observed, if he were to break the terms and be returned to prison he would have to remain there for the unexpired portion of the original sentence—namely, six months. The Board is of opinion that an alteration of the law in this direction would, from every point of view, materially assist in the attainment of satisfactory results.

The Board has, on a former occasion, indicated that there are two classes of offenders which merit special attention. We allude to the petty offenders who have a large number of convictions recorded against them, such as vagrants and prostitutes. They are continually going in and out of gaol and serving short sentences, and section 30 subsection (1) of the Crimes Act, 1908, is rarely applied to them. For habitual offenders of this sort, especially females, there should be a reformatory designed primarily for their detention and treatment, but unfortunately we have no such institution. A small farm in the country, where they could be segregated and taught intensive culture, would suit this purpose admirably. Unless they were released on probation, the period of their detention should not be less than four years. There are some offenders of this class who have as many as fifty convictions recorded against them, and up to the present reformation has been impossible. The Board very strongly recommends that this suggestion be given earnest consideration, as a small farm would no doubt prove of invaluable assistance in effecting the reformation which is so urgently needed.

The members of the Board who have held office since its constitution are of opinion that the prisons generally have been greatly improved, and also that the prisoners themselves, especially in those institutions where there is open-air work, have made undoubted progress in health and strength. This applies particularly to the Borstal Institution at Invercargill, where the prisoners, who are all young men, have more done for them than is done for offenders elsewhere in the Dominion. They are provided with educational and physical instruction and there is a certain amount of social life.

The Board is of opinion that this exercise of consideration and kinder treatment of young offenders will have a very marked and beneficial effect, and that labour in the open-air, drill, education, music, and gymnastics will very materially assist in the onerous task of uplifting those who have been antisocial.

Dated at Wellington, this 29th July, 1919.

ROBERT STOUT, President.

Approximate Cost of Paper.—Preparation, not given; printing (750 copies), £4.

By Authority: MARCUS F. MARKS, Government Printer, Wellington.—1919.

Price 3d.]