

working as your Probation Officer in Auckland under the First Offenders' Probation Act, 1908, and the eighteen months that I have acted under the Crimes Amendment Act of 1910, fully justify the statement that the system of probation is one of the finest things that our Dominion has in the administration of justice. Since taking over this work in Auckland I can say without the least exaggeration that the probation system in this district alone has been the means of saving at least two hundred young people from the stigma of gaol. From a citizen's as well as from an economic point of view this is of incalculable benefit to the community. Experience under the Crimes Amendment Act, 1910—that is, dealing with reformatory detention prisoners on license from gaol, and with habitual criminals also released by the Prisons Board on license—emphasizes in a very strong manner the advantages, to young people especially, of the first offenders' probation. The contrast in the general outlook upon life is most marked between these two classes of offenders. In the first place, the first offender, if possessed of ordinary common-sense, is generally so grateful for the opportunity of another chance that this gratitude is one of the biggest incentives for going straight in future; and, further, the escape from the gaol stigma helps the delinquent to face the world and make good. On the other hand, prisoners, especially habitual criminals released on license by the Prisons Board, often find it hard to face their fellow-men after a long term in prison.

Under the First Offenders Act I received during the year a total of eighty-six probationers (eighteen of whom were transferred to me from other districts), twenty-one for three years, thirty-two for two years, three for eighteen months, twenty-eight for one year, and two for six months and under. Twenty-eight were transferred to other districts, four completed probation, eight lapsed (that is, through committing some other crime were taken to Court and returned to gaol, &c.), showing that the percentage of those who failed to make good for their probation during the year is under 10 per cent. The year began with ninety-eight probationers under my care and ended with 100. The amount ordered by the Courts to be paid in restitution during the year was £311 16s. 5d., of which £139 9s. 11d. was duly collected. The amounts ordered to be paid for costs of prosecution were £50 13s. 8d., of which £48 8s. 3d. was collected. It is important to note that the payment of amounts ordered in restitution is of great disciplinary value to the probationers. Young men who have robbed people and find that they have to pay back by their own hard work are much less disposed to continue in wrongdoing than those who are sent to gaol and thus released from any responsibility in the matter.

Crimes Amendment Act, 1910: The year commenced with thirty-five probationers on my books, and during the year from the various prisons in the Dominion I received forty-eight; seven were transferred from other districts, showing a total of ninety of these men handled in the year. Twenty-six completed their probation, five were returned to prison for various causes, twenty-two were transferred to other districts, three absconded from probation and so far have not been traced. Of the number received, those who were returned to prison (five) make a percentage of failures of $4\frac{2}{3}$ per cent.—a result that is most satisfactory considering the long records that many of these prisoners had.

Informal probationers: There have not been so many cases in this class of probationers as in previous years, but those who have been received have, on the whole, been turning out fairly satisfactorily.

During the year the sum of £483 1s. 5d. on account of prison earnings was paid to Crimes Amendment Act probationers and to other prisoners who were released from gaol. This disbursement was made by voucher on the Post Office. In several instances prisoners discharged from gaol with a fair amount of prison earnings due to them, although not on probation, have had their earnings controlled by the Probation Officer. This has been a means of safeguarding these men from squandering their money and inducing them to use it beneficially to themselves.

The handling of an average of about 150 probationers every month has entailed a great amount of detail work, and would have been quite impossible for me without the valuable assistance of the Prison Officer who was assigned to me by the Department when I took over the Crimes Amendment Act probation in 1918. An idea of the detail work in keeping in touch with these probationers may be gathered from the fact that during the year there were 1,318 outward letters (exclusive of telegrams and monthly reports) sent from this office.

As in past years your officer has received the utmost assistance and co-operation from Court, police, and gaol officials, and the public little realize how many of the officers connected with these departments of justice will time after time go out of their way in order to help some erring young person to come back to the paths of a straightforward life. To all these officials for many kindnesses received I wish to express the warmest thanks.

Finally, the experience of past years leads me to express the hope that in the very near future our whole probation system may be so improved and linked up with other social departments that it will prove even more effective than it has done in the past.

REV. FRANK RULE, CHRISTCHURCH.

I have the honour to report that during the year ending 31st March, 1920, the work of the Probation Officer under the First Offenders Act, 1908, has been prosecuted with varying degrees of success. Morning by morning in the Magistrate's Court, and each criminal session of the Supreme Court, efforts are made to turn the energies of the potential criminal into channels that make for good citizenship. It is gratifying to find so few first offenders who get the benefits of this humane Act lapsing again into crime. Informal probation in the Magistrate's Court is certainly supplying a real need. During the year the young women who yielded to the impulse to steal so that they might be as well dressed as some one else, and as a consequence found themselves in the grip of the law, have found this modern custom in Court circles a real refuge. It is to be hoped that the period of supervision provided in this way will prevent further lapses. At the beginning of the year forty names were on our books. Since then thirty-four "informal," thirteen