

be sent is the gaol. There should obviously be a Department to which the public could go as a matter of course when advice, information, or assistance is required in cases of this description. Such a Department would also serve to link up all the voluntary associations that are engaged in social service, prisoners-aid work, &c., and could control the grants-in-aid that are at present paid out by different Departments to different organizations in a somewhat haphazard fashion. There is also ample room for economy and better administration in the more intelligent grouping of institutional cases, that could be effected were one management in control of the several branches now carrying on different sections of the work. In this connection I might point out that much pressure has been brought to bear upon the Department by the ladies forming the "Female Prisoners Welfare Group" to establish what is termed a "farm colony" for the women prisoners of the State. The proposal is really to carry on an institution on very similar lines to those we have provided for male prisoners, but with a somewhat different system of government. The scheme is quite a good one if it could be applied to all the women who are now committed by the Courts to various institutions, but is not practicable so far as the Prisons Department is concerned, for the reason that there are not sufficient women of the right class under our charge to warrant the expenditure that would be necessary to establish such an institution. If all classes of women that are dealt with were under one control there would be ample justification for the Department concerned purchasing the necessary land and providing suitable buildings and staff. On economic grounds alone the proposition would be a payable one.

If there is to be any solid effort to deal with the prevention of crime, root causes must be attacked. This cannot be done without concentration of effort. Under present conditions there is not, nor can there be, any such concentration.

FIRST OFFENDERS' PROBATION ACT, 1908.

A survey of the figures published from year to year since the First Offenders' Probation Act was passed in 1886 shows that in the aggregate 3,466 individuals of both sexes have been dealt with under its provisions up to and during the year ended 31st December, 1919. Of the number thus placed upon probation only 285, or 8·22 per cent. have abused the privilege granted them by breaking the terms of their licenses, leaving the fine record of nearly 92 per cent. of successes. This means that owing to the presence on the statute-book of this beneficent measure 3,181 persons have been saved from the stigma of imprisonment and the probable relapse into a criminal career as the result thereof. At the same time they have been made to conform to the requirements of the law by the restrictions imposed upon them while under license, and to compensate those they have defrauded or injured by the payment of restitution-money and Court costs. The total amount collected by the Probation Officers from probationers under this head during the past thirty-four years amounts to the substantial total of £9,975.

The reports of the honorary Probation Officers indicate in detail the progress and scope of the probation work carried on during the past year in the main centres of population. The summary of the results for the whole Dominion as printed in Table J shows that the number of persons placed upon probation in 1919 was 226. Last year's figures (192) constituted a record for the Dominion. It is therefore apparent either that the Courts are taking further advantage of the provisions of the Act, or that the number of first offenders is substantially increasing. In view, however, of the fact that a considerable number of persons have been placed upon informal probation in 1918 and 1919, it would appear that our Judges and Magistrates are extending the probation system to the greatest extent possible. Cases of informal probation are not reported to the Department, therefore no general figures under this head are available for publication.

The large increase in the number of cases in which offenders are simply convicted by the Courts and ordered to come up for sentence when called upon, on condition that they remain under the supervision of the Probation Officers or of the police, indicates unmistakably that an extension of the scope of the First Offenders' Probation Act is necessary, in order that Judges and Magistrates may be empowered to exercise a wider discretion when dealing with offenders who have a previous conviction recorded against them. An enlargement of the provisions of the original Act in this direction has been recommended, and it is hoped that effect may shortly be given to this recommendation.

The total amount paid by probationers during the year as Court costs and restitution-money was £894 6s. 4d. (costs, £404 12s. 5d.; restitution-money, £489 13s. 11d.). This is the largest sum collected in any one year since the passing of the Act, exceeding the highest previous total (1918) by £353 12s. 10d.

C. E. MATTHEWS,
Controller-General of Prisons.

INSPECTOR OF PRISONS to the CONTROLLER-GENERAL OF PRISONS.

SIR,—

Prisons Department, Wellington, 15th July, 1920.

I have the honour to submit my report for the year ended 31st December, 1919, dealing with the work of inspection of the prisons and institutions under the control of the Department, and the supervision of the various works and industries carried on by prison labour.

During the past year my time has been fully occupied in attending to the various duties attached to the position of Inspector of Prisons and Supervisor of Prison Works. The whole of the larger prisons have been frequently visited, and those of lesser importance at intervals as was found practicable. Generally speaking I found matters satisfactory. In so far as the inmates