

SESSION II.
1921.
NEW ZEALAND.

OFFENDERS PROBATION ACT, 1920

(REPORT ON OPERATIONS OF) FOR THE YEAR 1920-21.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

The Hon. the MINISTER OF JUSTICE to His Excellency the GOVERNOR-GENERAL.

MY LORD,—

Wellington, 17th August, 1921.

I have the honour to submit to Your Excellency the report of the Chief Probation Officer on the operations of the Offenders Probation Act for the year 1920-21.

I have, &c.,
E. P. LEE,
Minister of Justice.

The CHIEF PROBATION OFFICER to the Hon. the MINISTER OF JUSTICE.

SIR,—

Office of the Chief Probation Officer, Wellington, 31st July, 1921.

Hitherto the report on the operations of the First Offenders' Probation Act, 1908, has been presented with and has formed part of the annual Prisons Report; but the passing of the Offenders Probation Act during the 1920 session of Parliament has so enlarged the scope of our statutory probation system, created by the First Offenders' Probation Act of 1886, that a separate report by the statutory head of this important branch of social-service work has now become necessary. As Chief Probation Officer under the new Act I have therefore to present the first report regarding the working of the Act for the six months ended 30th June, 1921, the annual summary of returns under the original Act, and the reports of the honorary probation officers stationed in the chief centres of the Dominion.

For some years past it has been apparent to those employed in the administration of the First Offenders' Probation Act, 1886, that the Courts should be given statutory authority to extend the benefits of probation to persons other than technical first offenders. Efforts were made from time to time to place the necessary legislation on the statute-book, but it was not until last year that it was found possible to bring forward and pass into law a consolidated measure embodying all the amendments of the old Act that had been found necessary in the years that had elapsed since it was first passed, together with the sections giving the Courts full discretion to grant probation in all cases, whether there had been previous offences or not, and without restriction as to the class of offence committed.

It is, of course, much too soon to hazard an opinion as to the general effect of the removal of all restrictions on the granting of probation in lieu of imprisonment, but that the option given to Judges and Magistrates in this direction is being fully exercised is shown by the fact that 315 persons were placed on probation during the six months ended 30th June, 1921, compared with 139 for the corresponding period of 1920 while the original Act was in force. That the public and private purse has already benefited by the operation of the new Act is evidenced by the fact that while the total sum recovered from probationers for the first six months of 1920 amounted to £421, the total for the same period of the current year was £1,030. In addition to the visible gain to the State and to private individuals, who were thus enabled to recover money that would otherwise have been lost, there is the undoubted fact, comparing the figures under the two Acts, that approximately 176 persons were allowed to remain wage-earners under a system of restricted liberty who would otherwise have