

a considerable number of young lads and girls who are either about sixteen years of age when dealt with by the Courts, or are actually over the age of sixteen years and have been convicted and sentenced to imprisonment and subsequently transferred from gaol to industrial school.

JUVENILE PROBATION SYSTEM.

An important part of the duties of the Juvenile Probation Officer (both men and women are employed in this work) is the investigation of the family history, conduct, and habits of the large army of children and juveniles who, for causes varying from destitution to delinquency, appear before the Courts throughout the Dominion. The table below gives not only the number of such cases under the various headings for the fifteen months ended 31st March last, but also sets out in detail the decisions of the Court. Of the 1,572 coming before the Court, 101 were concerned in breaches of city by-laws, 471 were committed to the care of the State (mainly cases of destitution or dependency), and the remainder were charged with offences against the law—usually petty theft or breaking and entering and theft. Of these, 497 were placed under the supervision of the Juvenile Probation Officers for periods varying from three to twelve months. Of the total number, no less than 185 had convictions recorded against them. This fact alone indicates the pressing need for the establishment of children's Courts or Courts of equity throughout the Dominion such as are in operation in every civilized country. It is surely the duty of the State to provide protection and guidance and friendly supervision for the delinquent child rather than to mete out punishment by medium of a conviction in the ordinary Police Courts. Under our present system very little distinction is made between the offending child and the offending adult—both have committed offences against the law, and apparently both must be punished.

The fact that so many juveniles appear every year before our Courts is in itself sufficient reason for serious concern.

Inquiry concerning these cases indicates that in most cases the act that brings a boy within the scope of the law is the result of years of neglect on the part of his parents, of unrestricted liberty, and of the gradual growth of unchecked antisocial habits. Experience indicates that truancy, indiscriminate and unrestricted attendance at public entertainments (especially picture-shows), and street trading, such as selling newspapers and race-cards, &c., on the public streets at all hours of the day and night, are prolific sources for the production of juvenile delinquents.

It is the opinion of our experienced social-welfare officers that the numbers of juvenile offenders could be very materially reduced if a system of supervising such cases in the incipient stages could be established. There is perhaps no more important social service among the young than that rendered by our Juvenile Probation Officers. From a social point of view probation may be said to be a process of educational guidance through friendly supervision. Mere surveillance is not probation. Probation is an intimate personal relationship which deals with all the factors of a child's life—particularly his home. Its chief function is to adjust the forces of the community to the child's life. The whole function of the probation and supervision of delinquent and neglected children is coming to be recognized as a positive method of treatment, as an active constructive force in the lives of the children under its influence. Probation is regarded less and less as a form of discharge, of "letting children off easy," an idea surviving with that of punishment. Delinquent children are put on probation because it is the most suitable educational influence for them.

This conception of probation as a vital active force naturally carries with it the requirement that those who exercise this function—the Probation Officers—should be trained, sympathetic, and experienced men and women. They must measure up to high standards of character, personality, and ability; they must know child-life, the problems of the family, local social conditions, and the use of social agencies. The Probation Officer must bring home to every child a feeling of the directing force of probation.

The numbers dealt with by the Juvenile Probation Officers in the main centres during the period 1st January, 1924, to 31st March, 1925, totalled 1,572, and were dealt with as shown in the following table:—

District.	Committed.	Convicted and placed on Probation.	Convicted and fined.	Convicted and discharged.	Convicted and birched.	Convicted and ordered to come up for Sentence.	Sent to Prison.	Committed to the Supreme Court for Sentence.	Sent to Reformative Institution.	Committed and transferred under Section 25, I.S. Act.	Admitted temporarily to an Institution.	Returned to an Institution.	Adjudged <i>sine die</i> .
North Auckland	23	6	1	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Auckland	111	9	3	4	11	..	..	..	4	2	5	2	..
South Auckland	23	1	3	9	1	1	1	1	1	..	1	5	..
Wanganui	29	4	1	..	..	8	..	..	..	1	..	4	..
Hawke's Bay	34	..	1	2	4	..	..	..	..	..	..	5	..
Palmerston North	16	3	..	1	3	1	..	..	2	..	..	5	..
Wellington	63	3	9	3	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	6	..
Nelson	10	1	3	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
West Coast	3	..	..	..	..	3	..	..	..	..	..	1	..
North Canterbury	46	2	1	..	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	6	..
South Canterbury	26	4	..	..	3	..	..	..	1	..	..	1	..
Otago	58	..	..	28	2	2	..	..	..	..	..	1	1
Southland	29	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	..	..
Totals	471	33	22	48	25	17	1	1	8	4	6	36	1