

importance, and now that men are set apart to devote the whole of their time to this work it means much to the probationers as well as to the community in which they live.

I think the Department is to be commended upon the appointment that has been made to carry on this important work in this centre in the person of Mr. John Garbutt. I am satisfied he will make an ideal Probation Officer, and is already commanding the respect of those whom he seeks to help. Anything that can be done by my Department to help him I can assure you will be willingly and readily done.

Mr. C. G. L. POLLOCK, Probation Officer, Invercargill.

I have the honour to submit the following report on the operations of the Offenders Probation Act for the year ended the 31st March, 1927.

At the beginning of the year there were 26 males and 2 females on the register. During the year 26 males and 1 female were admitted to probation, and 2 males received on transfer from other districts, making a total of 54 males and 3 females dealt with during the period under review. This is 15 less than for the corresponding period last year. Ten males and 1 female satisfactorily completed the term of probation; 12 males and 1 female were transferred to other districts; while 1 male absconded and has not since been heard of; leaving 31 males and 1 female reporting at the end of this year.

Of those admitted to probation, 2 were for a period of one year, 10 for two years, 14 for three years, and 1 for five years. In 14 cases costs of prosecution amounting to £36 6s. were ordered to be paid, and in 15 cases restitution amounting to the sum of £159 5s. 5d. was ordered to be refunded. For the period under review the sum of £22 17s. 2d. was received under the former heading and lodged to the credit of the Public Account, while the sum of £115 12s., collected as restitution-moneys, was paid over in accordance with orders made by the Courts. The present financial stringency has its effect on the class with which we have to deal, for I have never experienced such a difficulty in having Court orders complied with. This must not be put down to wilful disobedience, however: it is due solely to economic conditions. In no instance was it necessary to bring offenders before the Court. It is a wise provision that permits of payments being made by such instalments as the Probation Officer arranges, for then due consideration can always be given to the earning-power and the responsibilities of offenders.

It is gratifying indeed to be able once again to record that the general conduct of those admitted to probation has been all that could be desired. The one exception is in the case of a young man who, immediately his case was disposed of, left town, ostensibly to seek work in the country, and has not since been heard of. He was a stranger to the district, with no ties, and of a nomadic disposition. The usual steps were taken to have him apprehended and brought before the Court to answer for his breach of parole. Of those who completed the probationary period it is pleasing to be in a position to report that, as far as is known, they are doing well and have settled down into respectable law-abiding citizens. It has been found very helpful in quite a number of instances to have the Court make it a special condition that the employment entered into is subject to the Probation Officer's approval. Experience teaches that the vocation followed, no less than the associates, plays a vital part in the rehabilitation of the delinquent. Where this is congenial and satisfactory good results can be looked for. It can be affirmed that a youth going adrift finds himself again more by the work he does than by the exhortation he receives.

This report would be incomplete if it failed to acknowledge the assistance received at the hands of the Court officials, members of the Police Department, and Mr. A. McLean, the Agent of the Patients and Prisoners' Aid Society.

*Crimes Amendment Act Probationers.*—At the beginning of the year there was 1 probationer reporting; 5 were received from the Borstal Institution, and 5 on transfer from other districts, making a total of 11 dealt with during the year, which is an increase of 3 on last year's figures. During the period under review 6 probationers were transferred to other districts; 1 who had left his employment without notice and committed a fresh offence received a further period of detention; while 1 other absconded and has not since been heard of, leaving 3 reporting at the end of the year.

With these two exceptions the behaviour of those released after serving a sentence has been satisfactory. In the case of the absconder, he was so unsatisfactory in another district that the Department directed his transfer to this district after suitable employment had been found for him. Drink was his chief trouble. It was thought that if he were given another chance away from his old associates he would make good. For some months he persevered, and it looked as if the desired result had been obtained, but he finally left his employment without warning, and has not been heard of again.

In former reports I have stressed the weighty bearing of employment and unemployment on the prospects of each probationer. Further experience only accentuates my conviction on this point. If any expedient could increase the chances of employment (especially employment which carries some hope that proved efficiency and probity will be recognized) the results of the probation system would be greatly enhanced. On the other hand, nothing more fatal to reformatory prospects could happen than that the doors to honest work should be shut in the faces of probationers. Frequently, firms and individuals, in a spirit of large charity, have responded to my plea on behalf of some probationer keen to work out his own redemption. That generous attitude is, however, not the prevailing one in the community at large. There is only too much ground for the bitter reflection of a former probationer who wrote to me, "A man's sentence really does not commence until he is discharged by the Prisons Board."