

I should like to record my appreciation of the helpful co-operation of the large body of persons in various parts of the Dominion who are assisting the Department in this connection.

Summarized in the following table are the number admitted to probation last year, as compared with the previous four years.

Year.			Direct Admissions.	Sentence deferred.	Total.
1927	..	..	.. 586	134	720
1928	..	..	.. 615	154	769
1929	..	..	.. 557	151	708
1930	..	..	.. 650	162	812
1931	..	..	.. 750	146	896

The increase, to some degree, is in conformity with the increase in crime, although last year a greater proportion of offenders was admitted to probation direct by the Courts than has been the case for many years. This is probably due to a gradual growing appreciation of the advantages, both socially and economically, of this form of treatment over penal segregation in appropriate cases. In view of the urgent need for economy at the present time, in considering the question of probation versus imprisonment, the practical possibilities of the former should be carefully considered in each case to avoid the cost of institutional treatment and also to obviate, if possible, the severance of the economic tie between an offender and his family. In the language of the physician it should be a case of "exhausting all therapeutic means before resorting to the knife."

The Crimes Amendment Act statistics show that 333 prisoners were released on probation during the year on the recommendation of the Prisons Board. Only twenty-four, including ten habitual criminals, were recommitted to prison for breaches of the conditions of their licenses. The placing of these discharges in employment and in other ways assisting them to rehabilitate themselves has proved a most difficult task. In a few cases it has not been possible to secure employment. It is thus remarkable that such a comparatively small percentage of those dealt with by the Board relapse into crime. Much of the credit for this state of affairs is due to the efforts of the large body of voluntary organizations and helpers who assist the Probation Officers in after-care work. The effectiveness of the present methods of parole and after care may be judged from the fact that during the five years ended 31st December last, 986 prisoners (excluding habitual criminals) were released on probation, and during the same period only seventy-five, or 7 per cent., were returned to prison for failing to comply with the conditions of their release, or for other offences whilst on probation, and only 23 per cent. have been convicted subsequent to discharge.

I desire again to place on record the Department's appreciation of the sympathetic co-operation of the Magistrates who have taken up the chairmanship of the Voluntary Probation Committees, and also to thank the individual members of the committees, the members of the Prisoners' Aid Society, and the officers of the Salvation Army, and the numerous other social workers who have so materially contributed to the success of the work by their assistance to Probation Officers and probationers during a particularly difficult period.

I am grateful to the members of my own staff for their loyal co-operation, and also to the Police officers and others who act as Probation Officers for their assistance in carrying out the probation work and their sympathetic attitude towards probationers.

B. L. DALLARD, Chief Probation Officer.

AN EPITOME OF REPORTS OF DISTRICT PROBATION OFFICERS.

Mr. W. J. CAMPBELL, District Probation Officer, Auckland.

Offenders Probation Act: Total dealt with, 336; total costs of prosecution and restitution-moneys collected, £355 8s. 9d.

The number of defaulters was 23, approximately 7 per cent. of the total dealt with. This result may be considered very satisfactory. If anything, conditions in respect of employment have been worse than in the past few years, and very many probationers, particularly the younger men, have had a very difficult time.

Viewing the past year's work it may be said that the conduct of the large majority of probationers was excellent. This is particularly borne out by the fact that during the recent disturbances in this centre not one probationer came under notice as a transgressor. This is gratifying, as it is during times when there is a loosening of restraint on the part of a section of the community that young men, particularly those out of employment, are apt to take advantage of the lawless conditions at the time prevailing.

Crimes Amendment Act: The average number reporting monthly under this heading was 66; 63 completed the probationary term, 2 were discharged by the Prisons Board, 5 left the Dominion, 11 were sentenced for fresh offences, and 5 had their licenses cancelled for various reasons. Failure to obtain employment had some bearing on the further lapses of these men.

Mr. T. P. MILLS, District Probation Officer, Wellington.

Offenders Probation Act: Total dealt with, 233; total costs of prosecution and restitution-moneys collected, £264 10s. 6d.

There is nothing very outstanding during the year's operations to note other than the same difficult question of unemployment, and the same struggle by probationers to find the moneys ordered by the Court. The results, however, have not been altogether unfavourable. The lapses have been normal, a small proportion only failing to regard the conditions of probation seriously.

Crimes Amendment Act: The number dealt with under this heading was 142, practically the same as last year. The conduct generally of these probationers has been good, many making a real effort to face the world and live down their past record.