

Probation in New Zealand is administered under a centralized system of control under the Department of Justice. Each Probation Officer has a direct and individual responsibility to the Court to which he is attached, but he furnishes reports regularly in respect of each case to headquarters, where a case record of each probationer is kept. Offenders in New Zealand would seem to be essentially nomadic, and the system adopted makes it more easy to keep a check on a probationer's movements around the country and to arrange for prompt action to be taken should he fail to comply with the conditions of his release.

The reports from the District Probation Officers disclose a satisfactory year's work, and, with few exceptions, those admitted to probation responded well to the obligations imposed. Approximately 6 per cent. only of the total dealt with during the year committed breaches of the conditions.

One Probation Officer states: "The success of the system is evidenced by the large number of ex-probationers one meets who have been restored to useful citizenship and who have retrieved their self-respect as self-reliant members of the community." Probation is essentially a method of treatment calling for firm but understanding oversight on the part of the Probation Officer and his assistants. An attitude of "maternal fussiness" is equally as disastrous to the best results as one of exacting narrowness. Common-sense and an experience of human nature usually commands more respect than experimentation with fanciful theories which are often grasped at by the wrongdoer as a means of rationalizing his conduct. Any philosophy which makes an offender feel sorry for himself rather than ashamed is not calculated to inspire the best results.

The total number admitted to probation was 813, or 54 more than for the previous year.

An analysis of the offences involved shows that the largest increase was in connection with offences (fraudulent statements) relating to the Employment Promotion Fund, such offences representing just under 10 per cent. of the total cases dealt with. These cases exercise the Courts to no small degree, their general prevalence and deliberateness calling for salutary penalties on the one hand, whereas on the other imprisonment involves hardship to the families who, in many cases, have already suffered privation through unemployment. Except in very bad cases, time is allowed in which to pay fines in instalments, the fines in many cases being fixed at an amount equivalent to the sum fraudulently obtained.

Unlawful conversion of motor-cars also showed an increase. There was a considerably less number of offences dealt with by probation for intoxication in charge of a motor-vehicle and negligent driving than in the previous year, and in this connection an interesting experiment has been tried by some of the Magistrates, making it a condition of probation that the offender shall be required to take a course of instruction in "road courtesy and driving" under the expert guidance of officers of the local Traffic Department. The reports received indicate that this experiment has met with successful results.

It is rather surprising to note, as conveying an indication of the more extensive use being made of probation, that in 2 cases of incest, 6 of arson, and in 1 associated with abortion the offenders were admitted to probation last year.

During the year under review £3,349 was collected under orders for restitution, £2,731 of which was restored to persons defrauded. This is a positive feature of probation as compared with imprisonment, where the offender is a burden on the taxpayer. This requirement to make reparation has a very salutary effect in most cases, particularly with young offenders, for the reason that the steady repayment by instalments indicates whether the probationer is in employment. The discipline of regular work is in itself a reforming influence.

Whilst the selection of suitable cases for probation is a vital consideration in the success of the system, the most important matter is the efficiency of the methods adopted for the oversight of the offenders whilst they are on probation. A fundamental feature of the system is that probationers shall be placed under the supervision of persons whose duty it is to "guide, admonish, and befriend them," and in this connection the Department is fortunate in having the help of the Voluntary Probation Committees and other individual social workers who assist in the oversight of probationers. It has been observed that overseas there is a tendency to make probation a professional job. In certain States of America it is considered that the voluntary worker is often "zealous but temperamentally unsuited to the work," that "many individuals enter into the work for the thrill they can get out of it, but as time passes the enthusiasm burns out"; or that "volunteers, with few exceptions, want the spectacular and soon droop their wings when they find it drudgery."

In New Zealand, whilst it is recognized that there are volunteers for both probation and prison work who are motivated from a sentimental or morbid interest, it is my experience that if care is exercised in the selection of helpers on the basis of their ability and not solely because of their expressed interest, voluntary workers are a most valuable supplementary force in probation work. The readaptation of our social misfits is essentially a community job, and it has been gratifying to find so many unflagging stalwarts amongst a large band of voluntary helpers who co-operate with the Department in this important public service. The professional Probation Officer acts as a directing and marshalling agency, and deals personally with the more difficult problem cases.

There are four full-time Probation Officers, each with an assistant, dealing with male offenders at the four principal centres. Each of these has a Voluntary Probation Committee associated with him. In all the principal secondary towns public servants, specially selected because of their understanding and sympathy, act in a part-time capacity as Probation Officers, and at other towns where there is a police-station the senior member of the Police Force acts as Probation Officer.

So far as women probationers are concerned, at Wellington there is a full-time Women's Probation Officer. The members of the Women's Borstal Association and its associates supervise