

1942.

NEW ZEALAND.

PRISONS BOARD.

(ANNUAL REPORT OF) FOR 1941.

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

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD.

Hon. Sir HUBERT OSTLER, Kt. (President); Sir DONALD MCGAVIN, Kt., C.M.G., D.S.O., M.D. (Lond.), F.R.C.S. (Eng.);
 Hon. JOHN ALEXANDER, C.M.G., M.L.C.; B. L. DALLARD, Esq.; THEO. G. GRAY, Esq., C.M.G., M.B.; M.P.C.;
 and ERNEST EDRIIDGE, Esq.

SIR,—

25th June, 1942.

I have the honour to forward herewith the report of the Prisons Board for the year 1941.

I have, &c.,

H. H. OSTLER,

President.

The Hon. the Minister of Justice.

REPORT OF THE PRISONS BOARD.

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER, 1941.

THE Board has to report that during the year it visited each of the prisons, prison camps, and Borstal institutions in the Dominion. It dealt with a total of 1,041 cases at fifteen meetings held in Wellington and at the various institutions.

The following summary gives details of the cases considered and the decisions arrived at :—

<i>Cases dealt with.</i>		<i>Board's Decisions.</i>	
Persons undergoing Borstal detention ..	402	Recommended for release on probation ..	498
Persons sentenced to reformatory detention	303	Deferred for later consideration ..	491
Persons sentenced to hard labour ..	262	Petitions declined ..	25
Habitual criminals	39	Recommended for discharge ..	8
Habitual offenders	Discharged from probation ..	16
Habitual criminals for remission of head sentence	4	Recommended remission of head sentence	3
Probationers under Crimes Amendment Act	14	Modification of terms of probation
Probationers under Offenders Probation Act	17		
	1,041		1,041

The urgent necessity for general economy in the present state of affairs warrants only a very brief review of the Board's operations for the past year.

The total number of cases dealt with by the Board in 1941 was 1,041, or 16 more than for 1940, while 525 persons were recommended for a remission of sentence, as against 541 in 1940.

The statistics when compared with those of former reports show that the percentage of offenders who make good after release has been maintained. Approximately 22 per cent. only of the total number released after undergoing sentences of Borstal detention and reformatory detention or imprisonment with hard labour have been reconvicted or failed to comply with the conditions of their release. When dealing with persons detained under the foregoing sentences the Board aims, wherever reasonably possible, particularly in respect of young or first offenders, to permit of a substantial portion of the sentence being served on license. This period of conditional release is regarded by the Board as being the final stage of the treatment prior to the discharge becoming absolute. The results obtained in

recent years in regard to habitual criminals have also been maintained and, while naturally not so good as those in respect of other classes of offenders, should, in view of the extremely difficult material handled, be considered satisfactory. Of those who had been declared habitual criminals and released in terms of the Crimes Amendment Act since the constitution of the Prisons Board in 1911, 56 per cent. have been returned to prison for failure to comply with the terms of their probation or for further offences. The Board was able during the year to recommend the complete discharge from the Habitual Criminal Act of a further 7 persons who have "made good" while on license.

The Board, after completing its circuit of the main prisons and Borstal institutions during the year, is favourably impressed with the continued progress being made by the Administration in the treatment of those under its care.

The ready co-operation of the Mental Hospitals Department results in the Board being furnished with regular reports and advice on prisoners and inmates, which are of very valuable assistance to the Board in its deliberations.

This report would be incomplete without reference to the members of the different after-care organizations and the many public-spirited citizens who give such excellent honorary service in the various matters pertaining to the rehabilitation of the offender.

OBITUARY.

The Board desires to place on record its very deep sense of loss in the passing of a valued friend and colleague, the late Mr. John Alexander, C.M.G., and the high regard and affection in which he was held by the Members.

GENERAL.

Since the Board commenced to function in 1911 no less than 29,913 cases have been considered by it. This includes prisoners undergoing sentences of reformatory detention, hard labour, habitual criminals, Borstal inmates, and probationers for discharge from probation or variation of terms thereof. Dealing with these cases under their particular headings, the results have been as follows:—

Reformatory Detention.

During the period from January, 1911, to December, 1941, 5,600 prisoners were sentenced to reformatory detention under the provisions of the Crimes Amendment Act, 1910. The number of cases that have been recommended for release or discharge is 4,570. In 660 cases prisoners were required to serve the full sentence imposed by the Court. Of the total number released after undergoing reformatory detention 28·37 per cent. have been returned to prison either for non-compliance with the conditions of the release or for committing further offences, 2·85 per cent. left the Dominion or absconded, 0·46 per cent. died or were transferred to mental hospitals, leaving 68·32 per cent. who have not further offended and who may therefore reasonably be assumed to have become useful and law-abiding members of the community.

Hard Labour.

Since the passing of the Statute Law Amendment Act, 1917, which extended the scope of the Prisons Board to the consideration of cases of prisoners sentenced to terms of imprisonment involving hard labour, 6,797 cases have been considered by the Board up to December, 1941. In 3,002 cases the prisoners were released on probation or discharged prior to expiry of the full time on the recommendation of the Board. Of this number, 1,905 completed probation satisfactorily, 177 were recommitted for other offences, and 79 were still reporting on probation at the 31st December, 1941.

Habitual Criminals.

During the period from January, 1911, to December, 1941, 678 habitual criminals were released on license on the recommendation of the Prisons Board. Of those so released, 56·49 per cent. were returned to prison either for committing further offences or for non-compliance with the conditions of probation. No offences are recorded against the remaining 43·51 per cent., and, allowing for those who have left the Dominion or died, this leaves 21·98 per cent. who remain in the Dominion and have not further offended.

Borstal Cases.

Since the coming into operation of the Prevention of Crime Act, 1924, 3,006 young persons have been detained under this Act, either by original commitments by the Court or by transference of youthful offenders from penal institutions or industrial schools. There have been 2,796 inmates released on the recommendation of the Board, 2,574 being on probation and 222 on the expiration of their sentence. Of the total number released, 60 have been returned to the institution for non-compliance with the conditions of release, 262 were recommitted for further offences whilst on probation, and 514, or approximately 18 per cent. of the total released, have been sentenced for offences committed after discharge or on expiry of their period of probation.

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