

Of the habitual criminals paroled since the Board was constituted in 1910, 59 per cent. have been returned to prison either because of their failure to comply with the conditions on which they were released or because of further offences. The percentage of failures cannot be regarded as unsatisfactory, having regard to the nature of the human material involved. Future conduct in such cases is not predictable, but offenders cannot on that account be detained indefinitely except in special circumstances. Each case is carefully considered. During the present year one person was, on the Board's recommendation, freed from the classification as an habitual criminal.

The reconviction rate in New Zealand is not abnormal and is lower than the reconviction rate in England. It is, however, disturbing that the proportion of breaking and entering offences in New Zealand is increasing, for it is beyond question that the percentage of recidivism in respect of that type of offence is higher than in respect of any other, and that the high percentage of reconviction persists through every age group, even to that which comprehends offenders of the age of forty years and over. Having regard to the buoyant economic conditions prevailing, it must follow that these offences have their origin in defect of character rather than in economic problems.

During the year, Mr. Dallard retired from the positions of Under-Secretary for Justice and Controller-General of Prisons. His appointment to the Board was not *ex officio* and he has, at the invitation of the Minister of Justice, continued as a member of the Board. His successor, Mr. S. T. Barnett, has been appointed a member of the Board.

To those organizations and to the many public-spirited persons who render valuable service in the suitable placement and after-care of the more difficult offenders, the Board expresses its gratitude. Much of the success achieved in the reformation of prisoners over the years has been due to their assistance. That assistance is most valuable during the critical period immediately following release when a prisoner, after a period of completely ordered existence, is again faced with the problems inherent in personal responsibility.

#### GENERAL

Since the Board commenced to function in 1911 no less than 37,928 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 the particular headings, the results have been as follows :—

*Reformatory Detention.*—During the period from January, 1911, to December, 1949, 7,251 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 5,998. In 738 cases prisoners were required to serve the full sentence imposed by the Court. Of the total number released after undergoing reformatory detention, 26.54 per cent. have been returned to prison either for non-compliance with the conditions of the release or for committing further offences, leaving approximately 73 per cent. who have not been convicted of any further offence.

*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, 8,871 cases have been considered by the Board up to December, 1949. In 4,536 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, 3,044 completed probation satisfactorily, 363 were recommitted for other offences, and 47 were still reporting on probation at the 31st December, 1949, making approximately 68 per cent. who have not subsequently been reconvicted.