

SESSION II.
1912.
NEW ZEALAND.

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, PRISONS BRANCH:
PRISONS BOARD
(INTERIM REPORT OF).

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

SIR,—

Judge's Chambers, Wellington, 20th May, 1912.

I have the honour to forward the following interim report of the Prisons Board from its appointment to date.

The Crimes Amendment Act, 1910, requires the Board—see section 12, paragraph (h)—to make in each year not later than the 31st day of March a report to the Minister of Justice as to the operations of the Board during the period of twelve months ending on the 31st day of December last preceding. On the 31st day of December last the Board had not been twelve months in existence, and consequently a literal compliance with the section was not possible on the 31st March. The Board thinks it proper, therefore, to send in an interim report up to date, which I now have the honour to enclose.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Minister of Justice, Wellington.

ROBERT STOUT.

REPORT.

THE Board was constituted on the 15th February, 1911. The members of the Board appointed were the Hon. Sir Robert Stout, K.C.M.G., C.J.; Messrs. J. R. Blair, F. G. Ewington, G. Fenwick, W. Reece, F. Waldegrave, and Dr. Hay. The first meeting of the Board was held on the 2nd March, 1911. Meetings of the Board have been held in Wellington, New Plymouth, Auckland, Waiotapu, and Waipa. The Board has also visited the prison at Waikeria, and the inebriates' retreats at Pakatoa and Rotoroa. The jurisdiction of the Board is, however, only to deal with prisoners who have been declared habitual criminals, or who have been sentenced to reformatory treatment. The number of prisoners that have been seen by the Board and who have been heard by it is sixty habitual criminals, and 105 subject to reformatory treatment. The Board has also heard many of these prisoners on more than one occasion. The number of prisoners that the Board has recommended to His Excellency the Governor to be let out of gaol on probation is sixty-four (twenty-seven habitual criminals and thirty-seven prisoners subject to reformatory treatment). Three reformatory-treatment prisoners have been recommended for unconditional release.

It may be well to state the procedure of the Board in considering cases where application is made for release. As far as possible the Board attempts to see the prisoners, and to hear fully what they have to say. This is why the Board, or a committee of the Board, has met twice in the New Plymouth Prison, where habitual criminals are detained. The Board has not, however, been able as yet to see all the prisoners who are confined for reformatory treatment. A full and unrestrained hearing is given to every prisoner who desires to state his case before the Board. The Board in determining whether release on probation should be granted has to consider (1) the past history of the prisoner, (2) whether there is any evidence that he is likely to be a good citizen in the future, (3) what chances he has of obtaining employment, (4) what conditions should