

Since 1917 the Board has dealt with the following hard-labour cases :—

Table D.—Hard-labour Cases.

Total individual cases considered	..	..	..	..	..	..	224
Number discharged from prison on recommendation of Board	..	..	..	..	..	..	13
Number released on probation on recommendation of Board	..	..	..	..	..	..	40
Left the Dominion	..	..	..	..	..	..	5
Recommitted for other offences	..	..	..	..	..	..	1
Completed probation	..	..	..	..	..	..	22
Reporting on probation at 31st December, 1920	..	..	..	..	..	..	9

The following table shows the cases considered year by year by the Board since its inception :—

Table E.

Year.	Habitual Criminals and Offenders.	Reformative Detention.	Hard Labour.	Probationers for Discharge from Probation.	Totals.
1911	65	105	..	..	170
1912	159	259	..	..	418
1913	157	403	..	..	560
1914	117	332	..	..	449
1915	101	273	..	..	374
1916	102	322	..	..	424
1917	95	329	14	..	438
1918	87	201	92	..	380
1919	97	471	115	18	701
1920	74	467	75	32	648
Totals	1,054	3,162	296	50	4,562

From the above return it will be seen that the total number of cases dealt with in 1920 was less by 53 than that recorded for 1919, but this is accounted for by the fact that owing to the influenza epidemic in 1918 the Board was compelled to postpone its annual November visit to the North Island prison institutions until the early part of 1919, and to resume its usual routine by paying the same institutions another visit at the end of the year. This resulted in a large number of cases being considered during 1919 that under ordinary circumstances would have been dealt with in 1918, and had the effect of throwing out the annual comparisons for the years 1918, 1919, and 1920.

The Board has in its annual reports referred frequently to the gratifying results of the probation system as applied to reformatory-detention prisoners. It is now in a position to give the percentage over a term of ten years of offenders of this class who have respected the conditions of their release on probation. It is most satisfactory to know that over that period 74 per cent. have not come again into the hands of the authorities. Of the remainder, 21 per cent. have been returned to prison for breaking their probation obligations, and 5 per cent. died or have been accounted for otherwise.

Of the habitual criminals released on probation on the recommendation of the Board, the percentage of those who have been recommitted to prison continues to be much higher. Only 25 per cent. have not offended further, and, of the remainder, 52 per cent. were committed to prison again, and 23 per cent. have either left the Dominion or failed to report to the Probation Officer and have not been traced.

It is not a particularly cheering fact to place on record that 52 per cent. of those released during the ten-year period under review were returned to prison, while 23 per cent. have left the Dominion or absconded, leaving 25 per cent. only who, to the knowledge of the authorities, have not relapsed into criminal ways. It has been pointed out in previous reports that many of these men are heirs to criminal tendencies, and, moreover, have had the misfortune to live in an environment which, under the circumstances, could hardly have failed to lead to active crime. The Board, in the exercise of its discretion, has given them the opportunity to continue in the complexities of the world outside the prison gates the good record they had achieved within, and, after all, it is something to be thankful for that 25 per cent. of these unfortunate beings have, under generous treatment in terms of the New Zealand criminal law, kept out of prison after release on probation.

On the whole these figures must be considered satisfactory, and especially so with respect to the reformatory-detention prisoners. The members of the Board in their periodical visits to the Borstal Institution at Invercargill have not failed to observe the great pains taken by the officers there to make the inmates realize that their future lives are going to be sadly marred if they continue in a course of evil-doing. The regular and intelligent methods of educational instruction given and the no-less-important physical exercises, in which proficiency is very marked, go hand in hand in the rehabilitation of the characters of those who have taken the first downward step, and it is a pleasure to the Board to be able to testify to the steady improvement in the administrative methods of the Prisons Department as evidenced at the Invercargill institution under its control.

It is no less gratifying to the Board to witness the steady progress that is being made with the reformatory farm at Waikeria. It is manifest that the better class of adult prisoners who are sent to this institution must, under the useful instruction in farming operations which they receive, and the health-giving outdoor life they lead, become better men. They leave the institution with an acquired