

knowledge of a class of work which enables them to speedily obtain employment, and there are many instances within the knowledge of the Department of men from Waikeria who have become useful members of society with but little chance of relapsing to evil ways of life.

The Board, when interrogating prisoners in the exercise of its functions and inquiring into their personal and family history, concluded that in some cases the prisoner was not entirely responsible for the acts committed, on account of mental defect or deficiency, though not so pronounced as to be classified as insanity. Some of these unfortunates were being provided for sufficiently well by the open-air life and work under discipline at the reformatory institutions, but some cases seemed to call for the observation, care, and treatment of alienists. More particularly is this so in the case of many sexual offenders, and with respect to that class the Board passed the following resolution :—

“Whereas an increasing number of sexual offences has been the subject of frequent and serious judicial comment, especially in cases where young children were the victims, or the very serious nature of the charge connoted a perversion dangerous to the moral well-being of society; and, as the experience of the Board in dealing with prisoners of this class accords, as far as it goes, with the now generally accepted opinion that, with certain exceptions, persons committing unnatural offences labour under physical disease or disability, or mental deficiency or disorder, or both, which accounts for the sexual perversion and the morbid character of the offence charged: It is resolved by the Prisons Board to strongly recommend to the Government an amendment of the Crimes Act under which such offenders could be dealt with scientifically—

- “(1.) Before sentence is pronounced, by furnishing expert medical or surgical reports or evidence;
- “(2.) By sanctioning an indeterminate sentence;
- “(3.) By segregating persons so sentenced and subjecting them, under proper safeguards, to any medical or surgical treatment which may be deemed necessary or expedient either for their own good or in the public interest.”

The work of the Board for the last two years has shown a heavy increase over all previous periods, and as a result of the legislation passed during last session and the consequent extension of the functions of the Board, its work in the future is likely to be still further considerably increased. The members of the Board have given very earnest attention to the important work entrusted to them, and they will assume the additional duties imposed upon them by the Crimes Amendment Act and the Offenders Probation Act of last year with the heartiest desire to assist the Legislature and the Prisons Department in their praiseworthy efforts to ameliorate the condition of the inmates of the Dominion prisons and reformatories and to improve its criminal statistics from year to year.

Wellington, 31st July, 1921.

GEORGE FENWICK,
For President.

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