

there are various agencies—State, religious, and philanthropic—that are endeavouring to help our weaker brothers and sisters, but there is such a lack of co-operation and so much overlapping that there is inevitable loss of time and efficiency. Years of experience as the probation officer in the largest district in the Dominion have convinced me that all social-service efforts must be organized if permanent and successful work is to be accomplished. What is wanted is a special department, under one Minister of the Crown, that would exercise a friendly supervision over all social-service activities, State and otherwise. It is only by bringing all this work under one responsible head that permanent good will result. I look forward to the day when this Dominion will have a social-welfare department that will control the whole work of dealing with the delinquents of the community. I would respectfully suggest that an effort be made to set up a committee of inquiry that can gather information and draft recommendations to meet this need.

During the year I received from the Auckland Courts 108 probationers under the old and new Acts for the following terms: Three months, 1; six months, 10; twelve months, 41; eighteen months, 2; two years, 29; three years, 21; four years, 3; five years, 1; total, 108. Added to this number 19 were received from other districts on transfer, making a total of 127 cases received. Of this number 4 completed their term, 39 were transferred to other districts, and 11 were arrested for breaches of their probation and otherwise dealt with. Surely these figures are sufficient justification for again emphasizing the opinion that our probation system is one of the finest things our Dominion has in the administration of justice. A failure of only 6·28 per cent.! Further, an analysis of these failures reduces what bare figures may imply. Of the eleven failures referred to four were hopeless cases from the first, and were merely deferred cases under the new Act that were given a chance in the hope that they might make good. One was a mental pervert who was quite irresponsible, and who could not understand what was required of him. One was an industrial-school youth whose record was not known when sentenced. One was a woman that was a victim of drink. Another was an Italian youth who could not grasp the significance of our requirements. Orders were made against probationers as follows: Restitution, £660 8s. 2d.; costs of prosecution, £334 16s. 2d.: a total of £995 4s. 2d. A large proportion of this money has been collected and disposed of in the ordinary way. I know of nothing better for his reform than making a thief or forger pay from his hard-earned wages restitution and the costs that the country has incurred by him. The year began with 100 ordinary probationers under my care and ended with 113.

Crimes Amendment Act, 1910.—As probation officer under this Act a number of prisoners on release on license have been under my care. This branch of work is very different from that with the ordinary youthful offenders, and while one meets with much encouragement, especially with the cases from the Borstal and Waikeria reformatories, there are many cases that cause great disappointment. It is strange how eager many prisoners are to be liberated on license, but when once released soon forget all their promises made to the Prisons Board, and break faith with the probation officer who has done everything he can to assist them. There is no doubt whatever that prison life, despite all the reforms that may be made with the internal conditions, destroys a man's independence and responsibility. Notwithstanding this, there are quite a number of notable cases of reform. A factor that helps greatly in this work is that the probation officer controls the funds that a prisoner has earned in prison, and by careful disbursement helps the prisoner to get on his feet and prevents him from squandering his money. During the year I paid out to various probationers the sum of £300 3s., and all this was chiefly in small sums. The following table shows the number of these probationers cared for: In April, 33; May, 32; June, 33; July, 28; August, 25; September, 26; October, 23; November, 17; December, 19; January, 30; February, 33; and in March, 39.

In conclusion I desire to state that the police and Court officials have rendered me all the help possible, and express my gratitude accordingly. The year's work has been heavy, and could not have been carried out without the valuable services of the officer assigned to me by the Prisons Department.

ACTING PROBATION OFFICER, CHRISTCHURCH.

In submitting a report of the work of the probation officer under the Offenders Act, 1920, for the year ended 31st March, 1921, I am not able to supply very much general information. The Rev. Frank Rule was in office until the 22nd January last, and my connection, therefore, with the work is of short duration.

Both Courts (the Magistrate's and the Supreme Court) have been visited daily when sitting, and the work generally in all its many branches regularly attended to. In most cases there has been a marked improvement in the conduct of the offenders, and few have again lapsed into crime.

The following cases have been dealt with during the year: Number on books at beginning of year, 60; formal, put on probation, 15; informal, put on probation, 36; transfers received, 11: total, 122. Formal, completed, 8; informal, completed, 20; transferred elsewhere, 19; sent to inebriates' institutions, 3; defaulted from country, 2; sent to gaol, 7: total, 59. Number on books at close of the year, 63.

REV. F. G. CUMMING, GENERAL PROBATION OFFICER, DUNEDIN.

The past year has been one of the busiest and—shall I say?—one of the most successful years of my work as probation officer in the district. The number of persons placed on probation under the Offenders Act was thirty-eight, which stands out as a record.

It is interesting for one to watch the probationer who has made up his or her mind to make good. The struggles of some are very real. Having no friends to help or advise them, here is where the real work of the probation officer comes into play, and the real value of the Act and his advice is fully realized. I again say that the visitation of the home, or where these young people reside, brings him into touch with the surroundings of his probationers, and he is therefore better able to advise them for their good.