

There has not been a great deal of difficulty in the way of control during the year, and the return of prisoners was only four. This goes to unmistakably prove the value of the Act.

I am fully convinced that the present amendment of the Probation Act is a further step in the right direction, giving as it does to Judge and Magistrate greater powers to deal with nearly every class of offenders on the lines of probation, and giving the probationers their real chance under wise helpful control to make good.

I must acknowledge with much thanks the great kindness shown to myself as probation officer by His Honour the presiding Judge, and the two Stipendiary Magistrates, who are at all times willing to listen to my recommendations. This is a great encouragement to one who is seeking to help the prodigal and save the wayward youth or young girl from going further astray.

Here again I must also thank the police and detective force for their kindly help and practical assistance. At no time have they been other than kind. Their advice and assistance have had to be sought, and have never been withheld.

There has been a large number of persons released on probation under the Crimes Act by the Prisons Board. This places a great responsibility upon the probation officer; great tact must be displayed if these released men and women are to make good. I must say that I am much encouraged, and full of real hope for this class of probationer; so far they have given every evidence of doing the right thing.

I am pleased that we have now a Chief Probation Officer. It was essential that there should be a definite statutory head of long experience to this important branch of social work.

There has been a large amount of money collected in this district during the past year for restitution, costs of prosecution, &c. On the whole the collecting does not necessitate much work. I have found, generally, a very honest desire to make good the amounts laid against them by the Court. This is most gratifying.

I have upon my books at the time of writing fifty-three probationers under the First Offenders Act, and sixteen under the Crimes Act, making a total of sixty-nine in all.

I would again repeat that the young person who gets the benefit of probation should be put on a lengthy period, not a short term; and this is all the more important seeing the probation officer can make recommendation to the Department for the remission; and, further, my experience makes me feel that the person who gets a fairly lengthy period always does best both while on probation and after he gets his liberty.

The year has been a good one, and the improvements under the amended Act make one feel hopeful of great things. I need hardly add that the machinery of the Patients' and Prisoners' Aid Society is a great help to the Department in shepherding and helping the probation work.

#### MR. A. McLEAN, GENERAL PROBATION OFFICER, INVERCARGILL.

It is gratifying to again record that throughout the year probationers have, on the whole, fulfilled the conditions of their release satisfactorily. In one instance only, a youth, who pleaded guilty on a charge of assault, was released on the same probation with restrictions requiring him to report himself weekly for three months, and not to be out of his home after 10 p.m. without the written permission of his probation officer. These restrictions have been strictly observed, and in conversation with his mother she informed me that having his liberty curtailed effected good results—greater than any extension of the period of probation would have accomplished—and that the restraints and discipline of probation have been good for her boy. Such voluntary testimony to the value of the Offenders Probation Act as a reformatory agent is very satisfactory, and gives emphasis to the conviction that the Act is on right lines and will prove of increasing value to the community.

The amended Offenders Probation Act, 1920, has been operating for some months. Under its provisions one youth who was convicted and ordered to come up for sentence was placed on probation under section 16 of the Act. The value of the amended Act, so far as it affects persons with one or more previous convictions, and others under deferred sentence, will be demonstrated as the years go by. It is certainly a forward step, and based on the sound principle that it is always desirable that the reformation of the individual should be accomplished if possible without the stigma and loss of personality imprisonment entails.

While neither overlooking indifferent fulfilment nor regarding any breach of the conditions of release as trivial, experience with probationers has shown clearly that efforts should not be judged entirely by results. In one case effort may meet with failure for the time, yet the endeavour may indicate more genuine reform than what appears to be success in another.

As in former years, the endeavour has been to strengthen and encourage by personal visits to and from probationers, to raise the standard of thought; and by enlarging the prospect a return to former conditions can be hindered, if not altogether prevented.

During the year thirteen were received on probation from the Supreme and Magistrate's Courts, and there were six on my register at the beginning of the year, making a total of nineteen for the year. There were three from the Supreme and ten from the Magistrate's Court. Two were for a period of three years, three for two years, six for one year, and two were for six months. There were ten males and three females, and their ages ranged from sixteen to twenty-four years, with the exception of one male whose age was forty-six years. Eight were transferred to other districts, four completed their periods of probation satisfactorily, and seven were remaining on the register at the end of the year. Included in the number transferred to other districts were two whose restitution-money is being paid through this office. Restitution was ordered to be made in four cases, amounting to £27 19s. 6d., and costs of prosecution in three cases to the amount of £24 16s. 10d. A total of £25 12s. 6d. was collected, of which amount £25 7s. 6d. was restitution-money.