

1924.  
NEW ZEALAND.

# OFFENDERS PROBATION ACT, 1920

(REPORT ON OPERATIONS OF), FOR THE YEAR 1923-24.

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

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The Hon. the MINISTER OF JUSTICE to His Excellency the GOVERNOR-GENERAL.

MY LORD,—

Wellington, 26th August, 1924.

I have the honour to submit to Your Excellency the report of the Chief Probation Officer on the operations of the Offenders Probation Act for the year 1923-24.

I have, &c.,  
C. J. PARR,  
Minister of Justice.

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The CHIEF PROBATION OFFICER to the Hon. the MINISTER OF JUSTICE.

SIR,—

Office of the Chief Probation Officer, Wellington, 23rd August, 1924.

I have the honour to present my annual report and the reports of the honorary Probation Officers on the working of the adult probation system of the Dominion for the year ended 31st March, 1924.

The reports of the principal Probation Officers show that the administration of the Act has been carried on successfully, and that its beneficial effects become more apparent as each year passes. The work of the Probation Branch of my Department has increased to such an extent since the First Offenders Probation Act was replaced by the Offenders Probation Act of 1920 that I have found it necessary to delegate the detail work and general business of the branch to the Deputy Chief Probation Officer, Mr. D. A. Mackintosh, who now receives and checks the reports of all honorary and police Probation Officers, and thus keeps in touch with the 1,037 probationers who are reporting under the terms of the Offenders Probation Act, and of about two hundred sentenced offenders who have been released on probation by the Prisons Board. The work is proceeding smoothly and satisfactorily, and, as will be seen by the tables appended to this report, the percentage of failures has been small, only 5.11 of those granted the benefit of the Act having broken the terms of their probation.

The saving to the community and the State by the operation of the Act is shown by the fact that a total sum of £7,694 has been collected from probationers by way of restitution to persons defrauded and by way of Court costs since the passing of the 1920 Act. The records show that during the whole period from the date of the passing of the original First Offenders Probation Act, in 1886, to 1920—a period of thirty-four years—the total collected amounted to £10,817. This is a useful illustration of the much wider scope of the later Act, and gives rise to the reflection that the principle of conditional liberty, combined with the obligation of restitution, might be extended, with advantage alike to the victim of the offence, the offender, and the State, to more serious cases of fraud, embezzlement, &c. A sentence of probation, or what is technically known as “conditional liberty,” with drastic terms as to restitution, payment of costs, &c., would often be more salutary and certainly more intelligent in its operation than the time-honoured sentence of imprisonment with hard labour.

The statistics appended to this report show that 572 individual offenders were admitted to definite periods of probation during the past year, whilst 43 offenders were convicted and released on condition that they should report at intervals to Probation Officers—making a total of 615 who came under the administration of the Offenders Probation Act during the period covered by this report. The number of offenders dealt with is the largest since the passing of the Probation Act in 1920. It will be seen that 104 of the total of 615 offenders, 376 were convicted for theft, whilst 45 and 34 were sentenced for false pretences, and breaking, entering, and theft respectively. Other offences were forgery, receiving stolen property, wilful damage, common assault, and obscene language. The statistics show that the provisions of the Probation Act are being extended to