

Prisoners released on Probation from Prisons and Reformatories.—This section of the probation system has grown considerably during the past few years. The increase is mainly due to the provisions of the Crimes Amendment Act of 1920, which gives the Prisons Board power to recommend the release of hard-labour prisoners as well as those sentenced to reformative detention or declared habitual criminals. The Probation Officers keep in close personal touch with the probationers and make every possible effort to prevent them from lapsing again into crime; but the class of men who are released from prison on probation presents an entirely different problem from the first offender. The need of close supervision in these cases is very necessary, and the Probation Officers, to be successful, must insist on full compliance with the conditions of release. For various reasons it is undesirable for many of this class of probationer to be employed in or near a city. Employment is found for the greater proportion of these probationers in country districts away from old associates and other temptations. They are encouraged by the Probation Officers to save their earnings and many of them have good sums to their credit in the Post Office Savings-bank.

General.—The report of the Deputy Chief Probation Officer, who is in personal touch with the detail work, indicates that the work of the Probation Officers throughout the Dominion is being maintained at the high standard which has prevailed in past years.

M. HAWKINS,
Chief Probation Officer.

REPORT OF DEPUTY CHIEF PROBATION OFFICER.

I have the honour to report regarding the work carried out by the Probation Officers during the year ended 31st March, 1925.

Under the Offenders Probation Act the Dominion is divided into 181 probation districts, an officer being appointed for each district. In the four principal cities women Probation Officers deal with the cases of female offenders. There are altogether 185 Probation Officers throughout the Dominion. Of these, 170 are members of the Police Force, six are permanent officers of the Prisons Department, four are "part-time" officers who receive an annual honorarium for their services, and the remaining five are "volunteer" Probation Officers, who, with one exception, are officers of the Salvation Army.

The efforts made during the past few years to improve the system of records and the equipment of Probation Officers have advanced the efficiency of the Probation system generally. Particular attention for some considerable time back has been given to the collection of costs of prosecution and restitution-moneys, and the greatest care is being exercised in dealing with these matters. The Department's instructions and forms at one time may have been regarded as unnecessary "red tape," but it is evident that Probation Officers now realize that in the interests of the probationers, the State, and the people defrauded, as well as in their own individual interests, it is very necessary that a system should be established which complies with the requirements of the Audit and Treasury Departments and safeguards the interests of all concerned.

We endeavour from headquarters to assist Probation Officers in the development of the probation system, and co-operation between the Probation Officers and the police and Court officials is always encouraged. Were it not for the spirit of co-operation amongst the Probation Officers themselves a high standard of efficiency and success in the development of the probation system would not be possible.

Although probation has long ago passed through the experimental stage and has proved to be socially if not financially profitable, its future development is in need of continued careful study and of intelligent guidance. The duties of Probation Officers are much more onerous and of greater value to the State than is generally recognized. Their difficulties are many. They are called upon from day to day to discriminate between truth and falsehood, between the plausible tale of the embryo criminal and the story of the offender who deserves the chance that probation can give him. The success of probation depends to a great extent on the experience, ability, and personality of the Probation Officer. In the large cities the Probation Officers have so many cases (numbers of them of a complex nature) that they are unable to give the time to supervision that in some instances is necessary. They devote themselves, however, to the work with steady perseverance, and their services are of infinitely greater value than their remuneration would indicate.

As before mentioned, the great majority of our Probation Officers are members of the Police Force. In the growing centres such as Hamilton, Palmerston North, Masterton, &c., the probation work is carried on by Senior Sergeants or Sergeants. The work in these towns is greater than can be adequately dealt with by the senior police officers, who have many other duties to attend to, with the result that considerable overtime is worked without fee or reward, and, fortunately, without complaints.

We find that members of the Police Force are scrupulously fair in their attitude towards the administration of the Offenders Probation Act and in their treatment of probationers. No complaints whatever of harsh or unfair treatment, either before or after conviction, were received from probationers throughout the year.

D. A. MACKINTOSH,
Deputy Chief Probation Officer.

REPORTS OF HONORARY PROBATION OFFICERS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH, 1925.

W. J. CAMPBELL, GENERAL PROBATION OFFICER, AUCKLAND.

I have pleasure in submitting my third annual report as Probation Officer of the Auckland District, for the year ending 31st March, 1925. Appended are the figures showing the numbers dealt with during the year.