

Rev. FRANK RULE, Probation Officer, Christchurch.

I have to submit my report of the working of the Offenders Probation Act in the district of Christchurch for the year ending 31st March, 1926.

No one can deal with the complex problem these delinquents present without becoming increasingly familiar with the sordid side of life. I regret that so many in the community are not educated up to a right standard in their attitude toward the unfortunates who come before our Courts. To make it difficult for a man to earn his living because in a foolish moment or in a drunken freak he did something that brought him within the clutch of the law is surely not a good policy for the citizens of this Dominion to pursue. That a man should find it so difficult to make good because average humanitarianism is not abreast of legislative enactment makes the task of the friend of the struggling much more difficult than it might be. To keep in touch with the homes of these probationers without in any way making their struggle harder is certainly not easy, and considerable time has been given to that problem during the year. Experience has shown that not much can be done for the class who, in the nature of things, must earn their living in the distant parts of this province. To keep in touch with these men by letter falls far short of seeing them personally each week.

One case this past year goes a long way to justify the leniency provided by this Act. A youth, less than twenty years of age, a member of a respectable early-settler family, got into trouble. After inquiries, it was arranged to give the Probation Officer authority to send him to his own family; and from far beyond the seas he writes to thank the Probation Officer for the kindness that gave him this new start in life.

Rev. F. G. CUMMING, General Probation Officer, Dunedin.

I have pleasure in submitting another annual report for your consideration and approval. The year has in every way been most satisfactory both with regard to the conduct of probationers and also in the way of payments of restitution and costs of prosecution moneys. The costs of prosecution collected amounted to £39 10s. 4d., and of restitution to £329 5s. 9d., a total of £368 16s. 1d.

The number of probationers dealt with during the year was 78. There have been lapses during the year, several being brought before the Court for failing to comply with the conditions of release. During the period under review 7 were sentenced to short terms of imprisonment, 4 to reformatory detention, whilst 2 had their periods of probation extended. It is a most inspiring thing to see men make an heroic effort to make good under the humane system of probation. I am able to say with certainty that the men not only struggle, but really win, and become most respected citizens. In the City of Dunedin and district there are many ex-probationers who have become re-made men, doing well, in excellent positions, and carrying the full and respected confidence of their employers.

#### *Crimes Amendment Act.*

The number of probationers dealt with under this heading during the year was 7. I have no hesitation in stating that the men who are liberated by the Prisons Board really make a determined effort to rehabilitate themselves. The more I see of this humane probation system in real operation, the more I become convinced of its usefulness as an instrument of true reform. I may again repeat that, on the whole, the men stick fairly well to any positions found for them, and, further, the year has been very satisfactory.

Mr. C. G. L. POLLOCK, General Probation Officer, Invercargill.

I have the honour to submit the following report on the operations of the Offenders Probation Act for the year ended 31st March, 1926:—

There has been a slight decrease in the number of cases dealt with during the past year, but full advantage has been taken of the provisions of the Act by both the Supreme and the Magistrate's Court, and any recommendation made by me has invariably been acted on. When the ages of offenders are taken into consideration an appreciable drop is to be noted in the number of those under the age of twenty years, but an increase between the ages of twenty-one and twenty-five years. With regard to the nature of the offences, an analysis discloses that those charged with theft predominate. From the information gathered in the course of investigations it would appear that the desire to live above means and station in life is a fruitful cause of the lapses in this category. There is an entire absence in this district of offenders preying upon society in gangs, the offences being of an isolated nature.

It is now invariably the practice for first offenders to apply to the Court for the suppression of their names. During the past few months this matter has received a good deal of prominence from the Press throughout the Dominion, and on many sides the fear is entertained that a certain amount of abuse has arisen in connection with this privilege granted by the Courts. To those who have first-hand opportunities of knowing it is evident that before making such an order the Court very carefully considers the matter.

During the year the sum of £29 16s. 3d. was collected as costs of prosecutions and paid into the Public Account; while the sum of £102 16s. 6d. was collected as restitution-moneys and paid in accordance with the orders of the Court.

#### *Crimes Amendment Act Probationers.*

The number of offenders dealt with during the period under review is considerably less than was the case the previous year. Without exception those whose term of probation expired complied satisfactorily with the conditions of release, and are now doing well in their respective positions. The results of the year's work have been gratifying indeed, as in no instance was it necessary to make application for the cancellation of a license, which would have involved the lapsed unfortunate being returned to prison.