

1926.

NEW ZEALAND.

PRISONS DEPARTMENT.

PRISONS BOARD

(ANNUAL REPORT OF) FOR 1925.

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

MEMBERS OF BOARD.

Right Hon. Sir ROBERT STOUT, P.C., K.C.M.G. (President); Sir GEORGE FENWICK, Kt. ; WILLIAM REECE, Esq. ; EDWIN HALL, Esq. ; C. B. JORDAN, Esq. ; D. G. A. COOPER, Esq. ; MICHAEL HAWKINS, Esq.

SIR,—

Wellington, 6th January, 1926.

I have the honour to forward herewith the report of the Prisons Board for the year 1925.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Minister of Justice.

ROBERT STOUT, President.

REPORT OF THE PRISONS BOARD

FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31ST DECEMBER, 1925.

THE Board has to report that during the year 1925 it dealt with a total of 1,134 cases at meetings held at Christchurch, Paparua, Addington, Invercargill, Wellington, Wi Tako, Point Halswell, The Terrace, Auckland, and Waikeria. The following table sets out under their respective statutory headings the number of cases considered at each meeting, together with the decisions reached :—

TABLE A.

Month of Meeting.	Place of Meeting.	Cases considered of							Decisions showing how Cases were disposed of.							Totals
		Habitual Criminals.	Persons undergoing Reformative Detention.	Hard-labour Prisoners.	Habitual Offenders.	Habitual Criminals for Remission of Hard-labour Sentence.	Probationers for Discharge from Probation.	Totals.	Recommended for Release on Probation.	Petitions deferred.	Petitions declined.	Recommended for Discharge from Prison or from Probation.	Offender Probationers ordered Discharge.	Recommended for Remission of Hard-labour Sentence.	Totals	
Jan.	Invercargill	..	161	4	..	..	..	165	33	123	..	9	..	..	165	
"	Paparua ..	3	30	18	..	..	..	51	7	37	..	7	..	..	51	
"	Addington	..	5	..	..	..	..	5	..	5	..	..	..	..	5	
"	Christchurch	1	26	27	..	..	3	57	8	35	..	11	3	..	57	
May	Wellington	3	99	78	..	1	4	187	28	127	3	26	2	1	187	
June	"	..	..	1	..	..	..	1	1	..	..	..	..	..	1	
July	Terrace	..	23	7	..	..	..	30	5	22	..	3	..	..	30	
"	Wi Tako	..	36	11	..	..	..	47	10	27	3	7	..	..	47	
"	Pt. Halswell	..	35	1	..	..	..	36	7	22	4	3	..	..	36	
Aug.	Wellington	7	90	54	1	..	3	159	15	113	3	25	3	..	159	
Nov.	Auckland	55	165	87	..	..	5	312	60	210	10	32	..	..	312	
"	Waikeria	..	77	7	..	..	..	84	23	59	..	2	..	..	84	
		69	747	295	1	1	12	9	1,134	197	780	23	125	8	1,134	

TABLE B.—SHOWING RELEASES AND DISCHARGES, ETC., EFFECTED EACH MONTH FOR 1925.

1925.	Released on Probation.			Discharged from Prison.			Discharged from Probation.				Re- Hard-labour missions.	Totals.
	Hard-labour Cases.	Habitual- criminal Cases.	Reformative- detention Cases.	Hard-labour Cases.	Habitual- criminal Cases.	Reformative- detention Cases.	Hard-labour Cases.	Habitual- criminal Cases.	Reformative- detention Cases.	Offender-pro- bationer Cases.		
January ..	7	3	15	1	..	4	..	..	..	3	..	33
February ..	7	2	15	8	..	3	..	..	..	..	..	35
March ..	3	..	8	2	..	3	..	..	..	..	..	16
April ..	2	5	9	2	..	2	..	..	..	..	..	20
May ..	6	..	13	6	..	4	..	..	..	2	1	32
June ..	6	..	5	..	..	4	..	2	1	..	..	18
July ..	2	..	8	10	..	6	..	..	..	..	..	26
August ..	5	..	11	2	..	5	..	..	..	3	..	26
September ..	2	1	7	5	..	7	..	2	..	..	..	24
October ..	3	..	4	4	..	3	..	..	..	..	..	14
November ..	3	..	4	4	..	10	..	..	..	..	..	21
December ..	10	6	21	2	..	6	..	..	..	..	..	45
Totals ..	56	17	120	46	..	57	..	4	1	8	1	310

OFFENDERS PROBATION ACT, 1920.

During the year nine applications for discharge from probation were considered by the Board, and of the number received eight were granted.

TABLE C.—REFORMATIVE-DETENTION CASES DEALT WITH BY THE BOARD FROM JANUARY, 1911, TO DECEMBER, 1925.

Total number sentenced to reformative detention	2,780
Released and discharged on recommendation of Board	2,001
Discharged from reformatories on completion of full sentence	382
Total number released	2,383
Of whom there were—	
Returned to reformatories for non-compliance with conditions of release	84
Committed to reformatories for further offences whilst on probation	156
Sentenced for offences committed after discharge or expiry of period of probation	323
Total number returned and recommitted	563
Absconded and not traced	26
Died	7
Left Dominion to return to former domiciles	44
Known to have been killed in action while on active service	3
Returned to Weraroa	1
Transferred to Rotorua Inebriates Institution	1
Transferred to mental hospitals	3
Transferred to Mount Magdala Home	1
Transferred to Salvation Army Home	1
Reporting on probation at 31st December, 1925	89
Number who have not offended since their discharge or expiration of period of probation, and presumably doing well	1,644
	1,820
	2,383

Of the total number released after undergoing reformative detention 23·6 per cent. have been returned to prison either for non-compliance with conditions of release or for committing further offences, 3 per cent. have left the Dominion or absconded, 0·7 per cent. have died or been transferred to mental hospitals, &c., leaving 72·7 per cent. who have not further offended.

TABLE D.—HABITUAL CRIMINALS DEALT WITH BY THE BOARD FROM JANUARY, 1911,
TO DECEMBER, 1925.

Total number declared habitual criminals	..	..	..	..	..	408
Of whom there were released on recommendation of Board	..	..	..	..	..	344
Of whom there were—						
Returned to prison for non-compliance with conditions of release	..	..	..	..	..	44
Committed to prison for further offences	..	..	..	..	..	113
Sentenced for offences committed after their discharge from prison or from probation	..	..	..	..	..	24
Total number returned	..	..	..	..	..	181
Absconded and not traced	..	..	..	..	..	24
Died	..	..	..	..	..	11
Left Dominion to return to former domiciles	..	..	..	..	..	42
Transferred to mental hospital	..	..	..	..	..	1
Transferred to consumptive sanatorium	..	..	..	..	..	1
Reporting on probation at 31st December, 1925	..	..	..	..	..	29
Number who have not offended, so far as known, since their discharge from probation, and presumably doing well	..	..	..	..	..	55
						163
						344

Of the total number of habitual criminals released on probation 52·6 per cent. were returned to prison either for non-compliance with the conditions of probation or for committing further offences. No offences are recorded against the remaining 47·4 per cent., but our tables show that 3·8 per cent. died or were transferred to mental hospitals, whilst 19·2 per cent. left the Dominion or absconded. This leaves a definite percentage of 24·4 who have remained in the Dominion and have not further offended.

Since 1917 the Board has dealt with the following hard-labour cases :—

TABLE E.—HARD-LABOUR CASES.

Total cases considered	..	..	..	..	..	1,376
Number discharged from prison on recommendation of Board	..	..	..	..	..	249
Number released on probation on recommendation of Board	..	..	..	..	..	355
Left the Dominion	..	..	..	..	..	14
Absconded..	..	..	..	..	..	1
Recommitted for other offences	..	..	..	..	..	16
Completed probation	..	..	..	..	..	251
Reporting on probation at 31st December, 1925	..	..	..	..	..	35

GENERAL SUMMARY.

The following table shows the cases considered year by year by the Board over the last decade :—

TABLE F.

Year.	Habitual Criminals and Offenders.	Reformative Detention.	Hard Labour.	Habitual Criminals for Remission, Hard Labour.	Probationers for Discharge from Probation.		Totals.
					Crimes Amend-ment Act.	Offender Probationers.	
1916 ..	102	322	..	..	..	..	424
1917 ..	95	329	14	..	..	..	438
1918 ..	87	201	92	..	..	..	380
1919 ..	97	471	115	..	18	..	701
1920 ..	74	467	75	..	32	..	648
1921 ..	75	564	167	..	18	17	841
1922 ..	93	594	271	..	19	30	1,007
1923 ..	74	671	304	4	16	24	1,093
1924 ..	80	683	302	3	13	21	1,102
1925 ..	70	747	295	1	12	9	1,134
Totals	847	5,049	1,635	8	128	101	7,768

If the report of the Board for the year 1924 is referred to it will be seen that the percentage results of the reformatory-treatment table as disclosed by the statistics for that period are almost identical with those of the year under review. The percentage of persons released on probation who

made good in 1924 was 72·7. An equal percentage was found in 1925. The number of habitual criminals remaining in the Dominion not proved to have further offended was 24·4 per cent. in 1925 and 24·8 per cent. in 1924. To test in another way the result of granting probation to habituals it was found that out of every 100 habituals that have been released on probation since 1911, 51·4 were up to the end of 1924 returned to prison for various breaches of the law, and at the end of 1925 the number so returned was 52·6 per cent.

In the 1924 report the Board pointed out that voluntary efforts should be made to aid and guide the prisoners who had been released on probation or discharged from prison. It has ever to be remembered that, as was stated in the 1924 report, the offenders against our laws are weaklings, many of them physically, mentally, or morally, and considering the temptations in our social life, it is not surprising that many fall and cease to be good citizens. It is not charity nor gifts they require, but guidance and training, so that they may be strengthened for the duties of life. They must be trained to see that if they desire to enjoy life they must be honest, industrious, and thrifty. The old maxim "Honesty is the best policy" should ever be remembered. We may well ask, seeing the vast number of good and altruistic citizens in our midst, are there not many who would be anxious to assist them? Such help would, it is believed, not only redeem many of our weaker sisters and brothers, but would aid in a fuller development of personality and of high aims in those who thus performed a great public service. The givers of such services do by such actions receive their reward, for they themselves are lifted to a higher sphere and become ennobled. If our civilization is to be preserved and extended, the after-care and guidance of our offenders cannot be neglected.

ROBERT STOUT, President.

Wellington, 6th January, 1926.

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