

1927.
NEW ZEALAND.

PRISONS DEPARTMENT.
PRISONS BOARD
(ANNUAL REPORT OF) FOR 1926.

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

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD.

Hon. Mr. Justice STRINGER (President); Sir GEORGE FENWICK, Kt.; WILLIAM REECE, Esq.; Sir DONALD MCGAVIN, Kt., C.M.G., M.D. (Lond.); D. G. A. COOPER, Esq.; JOHN ALEXANDER, Esq., C.M.G.; and B. L. DALLARD, Esq., Controller-General of Prisons.

SIR,—
Auckland, 3rd August, 1927.
I have the honour to forward herewith the report of the Prisons Board for the year 1926.
I have, &c.,
T. W. STRINGER, President.
The Hon. the Minister of Justice.

REPORT OF THE PRISONS BOARD.

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER, 1926.

THE Board has to report that during the year ended 31st December, 1926, it dealt with a total of 1,138 cases at meetings held at Wellington and the various prison institutions of the Dominion. 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.	Cases considered of							Totals.	Decisions showing how Cases were disposed of.							Totals.
	Habitual Criminals.	Persons undergoing Reformative De- tention.	Hard-labour Pri- soners.	Habitual Offend- ers.	Habitual Criminals for Remission of Hard-labour Sentence.	Probationers for Discharge from Pro- bation or Variation Terms of Release.			Recommended for Release on Pro- bation.	Petitions deferred.	Petitions declined.	Recommended for Discharge from Prison or from Probation.	Offender Pro- bationers or- dered Discharge.	Recommen ded Variation Terms of Probation.		
						Crimes Amend- ment Act.	Offender Proba- tioners.									
March	10	200	28	..	..	4	5	247	52	167	..	23	5	..	247
“	7	35	19	..	..	..	..	61	22	33	..	6	..	..	61
“ .. ..	..	5	4	..	..	..	..	9	3	6	..	..	..	..	9
May	9	110	57	1	..	2	4	183	43	74	49	12	4	1	183	
August	1	33	20	..	..	..	..	54	27	11	10	6	..	..	54
“ .. ..	..	46	..	..	..	..	..	46	8	35	..	3	..	..	46
“	2	18	9	..	..	..	..	29	10	14	2	3	..	..	29
“ .. ..	..	32	14	..	..	..	..	46	14	24	2	6	..	..	46
October	7	2	11	1	..	..	..	21	1	15	2	3	..	..	21
“	2	80	37	..	..	2	2	123	35	50	24	12	2	..	123
“ .. ..	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	1	..	..	..	..	1
December .. ..	..	181	1	..	..	..	..	182	31	150	..	1	..	..	182
“ .. ..	..	38	10	..	..	..	..	48	8	35	3	2	..	..	48
“ .. ..	..	5	5	..	..	..	..	10	4	4	1	1	..	..	10
“	9	36	22	..	2	4	5	78	17	35	11	10	5	..	78	
	47	822	237	2	2	12	16	1,138	275	654	104	88	16	1	1,138	

TABLE B.—SHOWING RELEASES AND DISCHARGES, ETC., EFFECTED EACH MONTH FOR 1926.

1926.	Released on Probation.			Discharged from Prison.			Discharged from Probation.				Re-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 ..	2	2	10	2	..	6	..	..	..	..	..	22
February ..	3	4	7	2	..	4	..	..	..	..	..	20
March ..	1	..	6	..	..	..	1	1	..	5	..	14
April ..	5	8	16	4	..	8	..	1	..	..	..	42
May ..	5	2	13	..	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	21
June ..	3	..	13	1	..	6	..	1	..	4	..	28
July ..	4	..	26	2	..	3	..	..	..	..	..	35
August ..	4	..	15	3	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	23
September ..	11	3	19	6	..	4	..	..	..	..	..	43
October ..	..	..	8	3	..	2	..	..	..	..	..	13
November ..	6	1	7	3	..	1	..	1	1	2	..	22
December ..	1	..	2	4	..	4	..	..	..	5	..	16
Totals ..	45	20	142	30	..	40	1	4	1	16	..	299

OFFENDERS PROBATION ACT, 1920.

During the year sixteen applications for discharge from probation were considered by the Board, and the full number received was granted.

TABLE C.—REFORMATIVE-DETENTION CASES DEALT WITH BY THE BOARD FROM JANUARY, 1911, TO DECEMBER, 1926.

Total number sentenced to reformative detention	3,003
Released and discharged on recommendation of Board	2,183
Discharged from reformatories on completion of full sentence	437
Total number released	2,620
Of whom there were—	
Returned to reformatories for non-compliance with conditions of release	85
Committed to reformatories for further offences whilst on probation	164
Sentenced for offences committed after discharge or expiry of period of probation	360
Total number returned and recommitted	609
Absconded and not traced	26
Died	7
Left Dominion to return to former domiciles	46
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, 1926	48
Number who have not offended since their discharge or expiration of period of probation, and presumably doing well	1,874
	2,011
	2,620

Of the total number released after undergoing reformative detention, 23·24 per cent. have been returned to prison either for non-compliance with conditions of release or for committing further offences, 2·75 per cent. have left the Dominion or absconded, 0·65 per cent. have died or been transferred to mental hospitals, &c., leaving 73·36 per cent. who have not further offended.

TABLE D.—HABITUAL CRIMINALS DEALT WITH BY THE BOARD FROM JANUARY, 1911,
TO DECEMBER, 1926.

Total number declared habitual criminals	..	..	..	..	..	416
Of whom there were released on recommendation of Board	..	..	..	..	..	364
Of whom there were—						
Returned to prison for non-compliance with conditions of release	..	..	..	..	..	44
Committed to prison for further offences	..	..	..	..	..	120
Sentenced for offences committed after their discharge from prison or from probation	..	..	..	..	..	31
Total number returned	..	..	..	..	..	195
Absconded and not traced	..	..	..	..	..	24
Died	..	..	..	..	..	12
Left Dominion to return to former domiciles	..	..	..	..	..	47
Transferred to mental hospital	..	..	..	..	..	1
Transferred to consumptive sanatorium	..	..	..	..	..	1
Reporting on probation at 31st December, 1926	..	..	..	..	..	28
Number who have not offended, so far as known, since their discharge from probation, and presumably doing well	..	..	..	..	..	56
						169
						364

Of the total number of habitual criminals released on probation, 53·58 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 46·42 per cent., but our tables show that 3·84 per cent. died or were transferred to mental hospitals, whilst 19·50 per cent. left the Dominion or absconded. This leaves a definite percentage of 23·08 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	..	..	..	..	..	1,613
Number discharged from prison on recommendation of Board	..	..	..	..	..	279
Number released on probation on recommendation of Board	..	..	..	..	..	400
Left the Dominion	..	..	..	..	..	17
Absconded	..	..	..	..	..	1
Recommitted for other offences	..	..	..	..	..	21
Completed probation	..	..	..	..	..	294
Reporting on probation at 31st December, 1926	..	..	..	..	..	28

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 or Variation terms of Probation.		Totals.
					Crimes Amend-ment Act.	Offender Probationers.	
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
1926 ..	49	822	237	2	12	16	1,138
Totals	794	5,549	1,872	10	140	117	8,482

It is satisfactory to observe from the foregoing statistics that, as heretofore, not a fourth of those who have undergone terms of reformatory treatment have again offended. Of those released on probation on the recommendation of the Board after serving a term of imprisonment involving hard labour, 80 per cent. either successfully completed the term of probation or were satisfactorily complying with the conditions of release. Of the habitual criminals released on parole, 23 per cent. refrained from further offending. Considering the intractable material dealt with, especially the latter class, and the whole of the circumstances, particularly the adverse economic conditions which have without doubt accentuated the difficulties that have faced the discharged prisoner in re-establishing himself in society, the results are decidedly gratifying.

The results of the Borstal cases are even more satisfactory. Of the total of 214 young offenders released since the passing of the Prevention of Crime Act, 1924, up to the 31st December last, only four, or 1·87 per cent. have been subsequently reconvicted.

On the 5th August, 1926, the Hon. Sir Robert Stout resigned from the Board consequent upon his appointment to the Legislative Council. Sir Robert occupied the position of President of the Board from the date of its inception in 1911 until the date of his retirement as Chief Justice, on the 31st January, 1926. Mr. Edwin Hall, of Auckland, also resigned during the year. He had been a member of the Board for eleven years, but latterly, on account of failing health, had not been able regularly to attend the meetings of the Board. The Board has to express its appreciation of the services rendered by these gentlemen. Both were deeply interested in the work of the Board, and gave their time, at considerable personal sacrifice, freely and liberally in this connection.

T. W. STRINGER, President.

Auckland, 3rd August, 1927.

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