

1932.

NEW ZEALAND.

# OFFENDERS PROBATION

UNDER OFFENDERS PROBATION ACT, 1920, AND CRIMES AMENDMENT ACT, 1910  
(REPORT ON OPERATION OF), FOR THE YEAR 1931-32.

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

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

SIR,—

Wellington, 14th September, 1932.

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 ended 31st December, 1931.

I have, &amp;c.,

JOHN G. COBBE,

Minister of Justice.

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

SIR,—

I have the honour to present my annual report on the working of the probation system under the Offenders Probation Act and the Crimes Amendment Act for the year ended 31st December, 1931.

Appended hereto also are statistical tables, together with an epitome of the reports from the principal District Probation Officers.

The system of placing certain offenders on probation first came into operation on the passing of the First Offenders Probation Act, 1886. Until the passing of the Offenders Probation Act, 1920, the probationary provisions were applied exclusively to first offenders, but since that date it has been left to the discretion of the Courts to admit any offender to probation, the theory being that if a person is found guilty of crime and is not really dangerous to the community, and if such person can be placed under authoritative supervision on conditions that enable him to earn wages to support himself and his family, and in certain circumstances make reparation, society may be better served by placing such offender on probation than by putting him in prison. In other words, before granting probation the Courts should be satisfied that the ends of justice and the interests of the public, as well as of the offender, will be served. From this it will be obvious that probation would not be appropriate to offences involving deliberation and brutality, or to habitual offenders, or to those whose crime is associated with mental deficiency, aberrational conduct, or perversion.

The reports from the Probation Officers and the statistical tables show that, despite the adverse economic conditions, the system has continued to be administered with success during the past year, both in respect of the conduct of those admitted to probation and in regard to the amount of restitution made.

The total number of cases dealt with during the year was much higher than usual—viz., 2,045— which number is made up of 896 new admissions and 1,149 who were on the register at the beginning of the year. Of the total probationers dealt with, only 142, or approximately 7 per cent., did not conform to the conditions imposed upon them. In regard to reparation, a total sum of £2,448 14s. 9d., representing restitution moneys and costs of prosecutions, was collected from probationers during the year. The foregoing results are particularly satisfactory, considering the conditions prevailing.

As a typical instance of the salutary conditions of probation, particularly in consequence of the statutory provision whereby probation is automatically extended until reparation by the Courts is made, it may be mentioned that during the year one probationer completed payment of restitution totalling £107 12s. 4d. These payments were spread over a period of ten and a half years, and the collection of the amount is no less a tribute to the perseverance of the probationer than it is to the patience and persistence of the Probation Officers who handled the case.

The unemployment problems have had their repercussions in the probation field—probationers have not been able to make reparation to the same extent as in past years; but, in addition to this, idleness makes for listlessness and moral laxity; and it has only been through considerable effort on the part of Probation Officers, Voluntary Probation Committees, and other social workers that the majority of probationers have been placed in work at all. In many cases relief work has been the only avenue of employment. The difficult conditions experienced last year have demonstrated beyond doubt the advantage of having organized the probation system on a basis whereby Voluntary Probation Committees would be available to assist Probation Officers in finding employment for their charges, and, where necessary, exercising personal supervision over probationers.