

1932.
NEW ZEALAND.

PRISONS DEPARTMENT:
PRISONS BOARD
(ANNUAL REPORT OF) FOR 1931.

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

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD.

Hon. Mr. Justice REED, C.B.E. (President); Sir DONALD MCGAVIN, Kt., C.M.G., M.D.(Lond.); D. G. A. COOPER, Esq., O.B.E.; JOHN ALEXANDER, Esq., C.M.G.; THEO. G. GRAY, Esq., M.B., M.P.C.; Mrs. C. A. FRAER; and B. L. DALLARD, Esq., Controller-General of Prisons.

SIR,—

22nd August, 1932.

I have the honour to forward herewith the report of the Prisons Board for the year 1931.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Minister of Justice.

J. R. REED, President.

REPORT OF THE PRISONS BOARD.

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER, 1931.

THE Board has to report that during the year it visited each of the prisons, prison camps, and Borstal Institutions in the Dominion. It dealt with a total of 1,514 cases at sixteen meetings held at the various institutions.

The following summary gives details of the cases considered and the decisions arrived at:—

<i>Cases dealt with.</i>		<i>Board's Decisions.</i>	
Persons undergoing Borstal detention ..	495	Recommended for release on probation ..	563
Persons sentenced to reformatory detention ..	480	Deferred for further consideration ..	800
Persons sentenced to hard labour ..	431	Petitions declined	103
Habitual criminals	79	Recommended for discharge	36
Habitual offender	1	Discharged from probation	11
Habitual criminals for remission of head sentence	2	Recommended remission of head sentence
Probationers under Crimes Amendment Act ..	8	Modification of terms of probation ..	1
Probationers under Offenders Probation Act	18		
	1,514		1,514

A brief review of the operations of the Board during the past year shows that, as heretofore, the results on the whole are satisfactory. There has been an increase in the number of cases reviewed by the Board. The number released after serving terms of Borstal detention, and sentences of reformatory detention or imprisonment with hard labour, who have been reconvicted or failed to comply with the conditions of their release is approximately 20 per cent. Of the habitual criminals

released on parole a little over 17 per cent. refrained from further offending. Considering the obdurate nature of the cases handled, particularly in the latter class, and all the circumstances, including the adverse economic conditions which have without doubt greatly increased the difficulties that have faced the discharged prisoner in rehabilitating himself, the results are very satisfactory.

In the institutions occupation is found for all the inmates, mainly out-of-door work, farming, land-development, tree-planting, gardening, quarrying, &c. As the main industries of New Zealand are what may be termed primary industries, it is better to aim at fitting prisoners for those industries in which labour is most in demand. That much is being accomplished and a great improvement is being effected in the prison regime is evident, and the Board is impressed by the progress that has been made and the results achieved.

The Board has availed itself, in an increasing number of cases, of the services of the mental specialists attached to the Mental Hospitals Department, in conformity with the arrangement which has been operating successfully for some years whereby the psychiatrists attached to that Department are available to examine and report on prisoners for the information of the Board.

The assistance rendered by the many citizens who help in connection with the after-care of prisoners, both by way of finding employment and in assisting generally in their rehabilitation in the community, is appreciated by the Board.

Since the Board commenced to function in 1911 no less than 17,639 cases have been considered by it. This includes prisoners undergoing sentences of reformatory detention, hard labour, habitual criminals, Borstal inmates, and probationers for discharge from probation or variation of terms thereof. Dealing with these cases under their particular headings the results have been as follow :—

REFORMATIVE DETENTION.

During the period from January, 1911, to December, 1931, 4,012 prisoners were sentenced to reformatory detention under the provisions of the Crimes Amendment Act, 1910. The number of cases that have been recommended for release or discharge is 2,911. In 592 cases prisoners were required to serve the full sentence imposed by the Court. Of the total number released after undergoing reformatory detention 25·66 per cent. have been returned to prison either for non-compliance with the conditions of the release or for committing further offences, 2·74 per cent. left the Dominion or absconded, 0·51 per cent. died or were transferred to mental hospitals, leaving 71·09 per cent. who have not further offended, and who may therefore reasonably be assumed to have become useful and law-abiding members of the community. These figures reflect creditably on the present system in vogue, particularly at the prison farms, for the reformation of offenders.

HARD LABOUR.

Since the passing of the Statute Law Amendment Act, 1917, which extended the scope of the Prisons Board to the consideration of cases of prisoners sentenced to terms of imprisonment involving hard labour, 3,349 cases have been considered by the Board up to December, 1931. In 1,248 cases the prisoners were released on probation or discharged prior to expiry of the full time on the recommendation of the Board. Of this number, 593 completed probation satisfactorily, 62 were recommitted for other offences, and 35 were still reporting on probation at the 31st December, 1931.

HABITUAL CRIMINALS.

During the period from January, 1911, to December, 1931, 498 persons were declared habitual criminals. Of these, 456 were released on license on the recommendation of the Prisons Board. Of those so released 57·45 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 42·55 per cent., and, allowing for those who have died or left the Dominion, this leaves 17·32 per cent. who remain in the Dominion and have not further offended.

BORSTAL CASES.

Since the coming into operation of the Prevention of Crime Act, 1924, 1,450 young persons have been detained under this Act, either by transference of youthful offenders from penal institutions or industrial schools, or by original commitments by the Court. There have been 1,020 inmates released on the recommendation of the Board, 900 being on probation and 120 on the expiration of their sentence. Of the total number released, 13 have been returned to the institution for non-compliance with the conditions of release, 75 were recommitted for further offences whilst on probation, and 150, or approximately 14 per cent. of the total released, have been sentenced for offences committed after discharge or on expiry of their period of probation.

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