

1933.  
NEW ZEALAND.

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PRISONS DEPARTMENT:  
**PRISONS BOARD**  
(ANNUAL REPORT OF) FOR 1932.

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

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MEMBERS OF THE BOARD.

Hon. Mr. Justice REED, C.B.E. (President); Sir DONALD MCGAVIN, Kt., C.M.G., D.S.O., M.D. (Lond.), F.R.C.S.; 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,—

October, 1933.

I have the honour to forward herewith the report of the Prisons Board for the year 1932.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Minister of Justice.

J. R. REED, J., President.

REPORT OF THE PRISONS BOARD

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER, 1932.

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 1,524 cases at fifteen 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	553	Recommended for release on probation	605
Persons sentenced to reformatory detention	489	Deferred for further consideration	774
Persons sentenced to hard labour	384	Petitions declined	88
Habitual criminals	69	Recommended for discharge	43
Habitual offenders	2	Discharged from probation	11
Habitual criminals for remission of head sentence	..	Recommended remission of head sentence	..
Probationers under Crimes Amendment Act	9	Modification of terms of probation	3
Probationers under Offenders Probation Act	18		
	1,524		1,524

Comparison of the statistics with those of former reports shows that the percentage of those who make good after release remains much the same from year to year. 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 21 per cent. Of the habitual criminals released on parole approximately 18 per cent. refrained from further offending. These results on the whole are very satisfactory.

The habitual criminal, as the statutory term indicates, has become fixed in his habits, and, after a lifetime of crime, the prospect of reformation is not very hopeful. The Board has endeavoured to give individual habituals a chance to continue in outside life the records they have made for industry, good conduct, intelligent and valuable work while in prison; but, while this policy has been fully justified in a fair number of cases—that is, of cases of definite and well-established rehabilitation—there

remain a considerable number of men who, although released more than once, have shown their utter inability to conduct themselves as law-abiding citizens. No man has been released unless it is known by his record in prison that he is capable of sustained and arduous work. In face of such records the Board has felt that these men were deserving of an opportunity of making good, and has accordingly tested them by recommending their release on probation. Some of them have responded, but experience has shown that many are definitely anti-social and are quite unfit to be at large. Those comprised in the latter category have to remain in prison for a further extended period. They have had their chances, and have abused them repeatedly.

The Board, after completing its circuit of the various prison institutions, has to express its satisfaction at the progress achieved during the year in the various occupations and industries conducted by the Department. Beyond doubt the wise policy of constructive work and education that is being followed is doing much to rehabilitate the unfortunates who come within the ban of the law.

In the opinion of the Board fuller use should be made of the existing statutory provisions for declaring persons to be "habitual offenders." This would be a greater deterrent than the present method of treatment. It would also rid the major towns of a large number of vagrants and petty criminals, and would save the expense of repeatedly bringing them before the Courts.

The Board has made increased use of the services of the mental specialists attached to the Mental Hospitals Department in the matter of examining and reporting on persons for the information of the Board.

This report would be incomplete without reference to the helpful assistance given by the many citizens who help in connection with the aftercare of prisoners, both by way of employment and rehabilitation generally.

The Board commenced to function in 1911, since which time 19,163 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, 1932, 4,269 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 3,106. In 598 cases prisoners were required to serve the full sentence imposed by the Court. Of the total number released after undergoing reformatory detention 26·10 per cent. have been returned to prison either for non-compliance with the conditions of the release or for committing further offences, 2·75 per cent. left the Dominion or absconded, 0·49 per cent. died or were transferred to mental hospitals, leaving 70·66 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. The foregoing figures indicate the success of the Prisons Department's system, 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, 3,733 cases have been considered by the Board up to December, 1932. In 1,431 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 701 completed probation satisfactorily, 75 were recommitted for other offences, and 17 were still reporting on probation at the 31st December, 1932.

#### HABITUAL CRIMINALS.

Persons declared habitual criminals during the period from January, 1911, to December, 1932, numbered 510. Of these, 480 were released on license on the recommendation of the Prisons Board. Of those so released, 57·5 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 42·5 per cent., and, allowing for those who have died or left the Dominion, this leaves 17·91 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, 1,653 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 1,258 inmates released on the recommendation of the Board, 1,130 being on probation and 128 on the expiration of their sentence. Of the total number released, 15 have been returned to the institution for non-compliance with the conditions of release, 96 were recommitted for further offences whilst on probation, and 196, or approximately 15 per cent. of the total released, have been sentenced for offences committed after discharge or on expiry of their period of probation. The Borstal results are exceedingly satisfactory and compare more than favourably with Great Britain, where the latest figures show that the percentage of success is 65.

*Approximate Cost of Paper.*—Preparation, not given; printing (650 copies), £2.

By Authority: G. H. LONEY, Government Printer, Wellington.