

PENAL TRENDS WITHIN NEW ZEALAND

Today we are doing our best:

- (i) To get the interest and support of the citizen in penal administration;
- (ii) To deal with many offenders without removing them from the community;
- (iii) To give inmates better preparation for life within the community upon their release from institutions.

SENTENCES

New forms of sentences have been introduced. One illustration is periodic detention. There is also a greater emphasis upon the use of fines in place of imprisonment and maximum fines for many offences have been increased.

Under the Criminal Justice Amendment Act 1967 the use of sentences of less than 6 months is restricted to cases where the Court considers there is no appropriate alternative to a prison sentence. This gives further emphasis to the principle that offenders should be removed from the community only as a last resort.

PROBATION AND OTHER MEASURES WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

In recent years greater emphasis has been placed on probation with special conditions as to employment and residence.

In June 1968 a diagnostic and treatment centre was established in Auckland for offenders on probation who are considered to be in need of specialist attention. The centre is administered by a group consisting of a forensic psychiatrist, a psychologist, a doctor, and the District Probation Officer.

Periodic Detention

The sentence of periodic detention provides detention and supervision but without interfering with the normal working lives of offenders. Youths are detained at a centre during weekends and are required to report on one or two evenings during the week. The programme at a centre includes discussions, lectures, and

counselling in the evenings, and work during the day on Saturdays. Offenders work at the centres and also on outside projects of value to the community.

The first periodic detention centre for youths was established in Auckland in 1963. Since then the scheme has been extended to Christchurch, 1964; Lower Hutt, 1965; and Invercargill, 1965. Each centre has an advisory committee presided over by a Stipendiary Magistrate. Committees represent church social services, the Police, the Child Welfare Division, the Trade Union Movement, and employers.

In 1967 periodic detention was extended to include adult offenders as well. Adults report to non-residential centres for work on Saturdays only. An adult centre was first established in Auckland and we now have similar centres at Hamilton, Wellington, Christchurch, and Dunedin.

Probation With Community Work

Periodic detention centres can be established only where there are comparatively large centres of population. However, in other areas offenders can be released on probation with a special condition requiring a certain number of hours at community work. As with periodic detention centres these schemes have local advisory committees.

Hostels

Probation Hostels

Church social services and the department work together in providing hostels for young probationers. In this way youths on the fringe of serious offending are placed in an atmosphere where they can be counselled more effectively and where they can gain greater insight and maturity.

Pre-release Hostels

These hostels provide a bridge for some inmates from the penal institution to the community. Hostel residents are helped to find suitable jobs and good accommodation, and in general to adjust gradually to normal life before their final release.

Post-release Hostels

The Justice Department has encouraged voluntary organisations to co-operate with the probation service in providing hostels for prisoners on their release. Post-release hostels offer continuing support for ex-inmates who otherwise would offend again.

GENERAL PENAL MEASURES

The Detention Centre

In June 1961, a detention centre was opened at Waikeria for youths between 16 and 21 years of age. The sentence (maximum 3 months) is followed by probation for 12 months. The emphasis is on hard work and strict discipline. An evening programme of lectures, discussions, and counselling is designed to stimulate cultural interests and good citizenship.

Classification of First Term Adult Offenders

A classification centre was established at Wī Tako Prison in March 1964 for adult male offenders who have not previously served a period of imprisonment apart from one sentence of up to 1 month or detention centre training. Each inmate appears before a classification board which plans an individual programme of treatment for him.

Discussion Groups

These groups are small gatherings of inmates who, with an officer, meet voluntarily under informal conditions. Discussion groups encourage inmates to form constructive relationships with others and to become more aware of their personal problems, including the causes of their offending.

Community Work by Inmates

Many of our institutions, and particularly the borstals, assist with community projects. Clubs formed at Invercargill and Waikeria Borstals undertake community work and encourage civic responsibility and social awareness in the trainees.

Home Leave for First Offenders

Married inmates serving their first sentence of imprisonment may be granted up to 3 days' home leave plus travelling time once every 4 months. Before leave is approved an inmate must have an established home to go to, his wife and family must be in favour, and the public safety must be considered.

Compassionate and Pre-release Parole

Inmates may be allowed temporary release on parole either for compassionate reasons (the serious illness or death of a relative), or during the last 3 months of a sentence to help them to settle in the community.

Release to Work

Since November 1961, selected inmates in all institutions have been allowed daily parole to engage in outside employment.

The scheme was designed to assist the rehabilitation of those nearing the end of their sentences. While at work the inmates pay board to the institution and contribute towards the maintenance of their dependants. Additional sums may also be set aside for the payment of outstanding fines, for restitution, and for medical and dental treatment. What remains is held for the benefit of the inmate.

Remission of Sentences

Subject to good conduct, an inmate serving a finite sentence of imprisonment may receive remission of up to one-quarter of his sentence. In 1964 Parliament authorised the granting of special additional remission not exceeding one-twelfth of the sentence as a reward for exemplary conduct.

STAFFING

The prison officer cadet scheme began in February 1967 with 15 cadets. A further 15 were enrolled in 1968 and there will be an intake each year of about that number. The 2-year course covers academic work (from School Certificate to university subjects); practical and theoretical penal work; physical and social development; and training in appropriate special skills such as first aid, driving, bushcraft, judo, and lifesaving.

We place great importance on the careful selection and training of all staff. The work calls for a high standard of mental and physical alertness and many men and women have found that the penal or probation service offers an extremely interesting and satisfying career.

COMMUNITY CO-OPERATION

The growing goodwill of the community towards our work is shown in a number of ways. Members of the public serve on parole boards and on advisory committees to periodic detention centres. Churches and voluntary organisations contribute towards welfare amenities, and their members visit institutions and hostels. Notable service is given by the Prisoners' Aid and Rehabilitation Society by visits to inmates, placement in employment on release, and practical aid to families. Church social services and the Prisoners' Aid and Rehabilitation Society work in conjunction with the probation service in providing hostels for probationers and for released prisoners.

Further Information

This will gladly be sent if you write to the Secretary for Justice, Justice Department, Wellington.