

preventive supervision at the end of the year was 1,978. The visiting and inquiry work of Welfare Officers has been rendered difficult on account of necessary restrictions upon means of transport; further, owing to the absence of a number of parents on military duties and the consequent slackening of home control, there has been necessity for increased inquiries and visits by officers to homes in the interests of children and young people, who are inclined to become unsettled under war conditions.

I consider that it is in the sphere of preventive work that our best energies should be directed. Through the co-ordinated efforts of the nursing and medical profession, the churches, the teachers and welfare workers, and the parents every effort should be made to direct the children's lives in accordance with socially accepted standards and to prevent them from appearing before Courts for offences. While the Children's Courts must form a most important part of our child welfare system, still I am of the opinion that our work should be centred more around the preventive side of the work. From my experience I feel that many well-intentioned parents do not adopt right attitudes towards their children, and this is a predisposing cause of child delinquency. Some parents neglect their children to the extent that decisive action becomes imperative by the authorities. In a number of these cases continued contact by the Welfare Officers often proves effective. On the other hand, it has been found that many parents welcome and adopt sympathetic suggestions and advice regarding the training of their children, and an increasing number are applying to our officers for guidance and help. In the course of its preventive work where inquiries were made regarding living-conditions, the Department was enabled in a number of cases to arrange for assistance to be given and thus preserve the family unit. In cases presenting unusual difficulties, the assistance of the clinics attached to the University colleges and the services of psychiatrists of the Mental Hospitals Department are availed of.

*Children's Courts and Delinquency.*—Table 2 appended shows that for the year ended 31st March, there was an increase of 135 in the total number of children appearing before the Courts—3,071, as against 2,936 the previous year. This total includes children brought up on all counts, including indigency and other complaints not necessarily casting any reflection on the conduct of the child. There was not unexpectedly an increase (102) in the number of children dealt with as not under proper control. All those who were required to answer specific charges for offences are grouped together, and it will be noted that, compared with last year, there was an increase of only 25 in this group. At times a child may have a dozen charges preferred against him at the one sitting of the Court, but it has never been the practice of the Department to account for these separate charges. Also, there are times when a child coming before the Court as "not under proper control" may have committed some offence. Then, again, many minor cases—mischief, &c.—are quite properly dealt with by the police and Child Welfare Officers without recourse to the Court; this has always been the practice. After allowing for all these factors, our method of recording each year gives a fair indication of the incidence of juvenile delinquency as a whole. Of the 2,446 children appearing before Courts for offences, 364 had appeared at some time previously for offences. New Zealand has adopted what is regarded by many overseas authorities as too high a standard in assessing recidivism, since it sets no time-limit for the intervening period since the committal of the first offence. The figures should be read in the light of this rather stringent condition.

The number of children appearing before the Courts on all counts is 4.6 per cent. above the number for last year, and this is the first increase since the beginning of the war. The increase in the number of children answering charges for offences, however, is only 1 per cent., and even if we allow a margin for offences in those cases where children were dealt with by the Courts as "not under proper control," the increase for the year is still only approximately 3 per cent. In view of the present conditions, this increase is not surprising; but no one connected with child welfare can be satisfied with any rise, however small, and all social agencies—State, churches, and private—must increase their efforts for our young people in these difficult times. In dealing with the children the Courts continue to use freely the provision to place children for a period under the legal supervision of Child Welfare Officers. The results obtained in this direction are very satisfactory.

*British Children.*—At the 31st March the total number of boys and girls evacuated from Great Britain to this Dominion and under my legal supervision was 204. With one or two exceptions, these had then been residing here about two and a half years. Seventy-seven of them were attending primary, and 82 post-primary schools, while 45 had left school. Of those who had left school, 1 boy and 1 girl are attending University full time; 3 girls and 1 boy are attending teachers' training colleges; 4 boys and 1 girl were appointed to positions in the Public Service; 6 boys are farming; 2 boys are apprenticed and others placed with that object in view; and the remainder are engaged in various occupations in shops, offices, &c. Thirteen of the children who are working are still attending night classes at technical schools. The health of the children has been very good. In a few cases where the children met with accidents or required minor operations the patients responded readily to treatment. The children are eager to help with the war effort, and the majority of the older boys are connected with the national services in one form or another (Air Training Corps, Emergency Precautions Scheme, or Home Guard). For various causes it was necessary to arrange for the transfer of 25 children during the year to new homes. The reason for the majority of the changes was the illness of the foster-parent or some other cause not reflecting upon either the foster-parent or the child.

The reports received on all the children indicate very satisfactory progress at school or at work. They keep in close touch with their parents, and in this, as in other matters, they have the fullest assistance from their foster-parents in New Zealand.

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The Director of Education, Wellington.