

mischievous show a tendency to increase in the twelve to fourteen age-group. As between last year and this, there is no significant rise in the frequency of these offences per hundred of the child population in the different age-groups.

In comparison with most other countries New Zealand has been fortunate in having such a small increase in juvenile delinquency during the war period.

As this report shows, the activities of the Branch are wide and are concerned with much more than dealing with delinquents. Occasional newspaper reports that certain juvenile delinquents are State wards should not lead the public to assume that all State wards as such are given to delinquency. There is a tendency to associate the two ideas without real warrant, for the majority of State wards are committed to the care of the State through no fault of their own, and are not, and probably never will be, delinquent.

During the year the Courts continued to utilize that section of the Act under which children may be placed under the legal supervision of Child Welfare Officers for a period—generally of one to two years, or more in special cases. There were 1,043 children so dealt with during the year. The Child Welfare Officers either supervise these children in their own homes or arrange, with the concurrence of the parents, to place them in suitable employment, with safeguards regarding their wages and living-conditions. This section of the Act continues to provide a very satisfactory method of dealing with considerable numbers of children brought before the Courts.

The war has certainly brought us additional problems with young people, but the fact that these are largely due to war conditions must not be overlooked.

The Child Welfare Officers work in close co-operation with officers of the Police Department in dealing with all offences committed by juveniles.

*Preventive Work.*—In addition to the children dealt with under other categories mentioned in this report, there were at the end of the year a total of 1,954 children who were dealt with under our policy of "preventive" supervision.

As soon as cases are reported of children misbehaving or for any other reason needing care, the Child Welfare Officers visit the homes. Frequently the case can be dealt with at the one visit by means of advice to the parents and the children, and no further action is necessary. In other cases contact by the Child Welfare Officers is continued for a period of one or two years, or even more in certain cases. The Welfare Officers, including honorary officers, carry out this preventive work in close contact with teachers, the churches, and private organizations. In cases presenting unusual behaviour problems, the assistance of the clinics attached to the University colleges and the services of psychiatrists of the Mental Hospitals Department are freely availed of. It has been our experience that the majority of parents, when properly approached, welcome and adopt sympathetic suggestions and advice regarding the training of their children. With those who will not co-operate the only course left as a rule is for the children to be committed. An increasing number of parents apply to our Welfare Officers for assistance and advice. They are, where necessary, referred to the nearest clinic or to a medical practitioner or to some other authority who might assist. I am still of the opinion that our best work in the future must be preventive. Much of the work performed by this Branch after children appear before Courts can be regarded as of a palliative type. To build for the future a commencement should be made from the cradle with competent advice to parents during the child's early habit-forming years. This should be done by the co-operation of parents, the nursing and medical professions, the churches, teachers, and welfare workers, to ensure that the life of the child be directed in accordance with accepted standards of good conduct and morality. The importance of a thorough training in self-discipline cannot be overstressed.

I am pleased to record that, in furtherance of our policy of co-operation with other welfare services, further progress was made during the year in linking up more closely with other State services and with private organizations; in the latter case liaison officers are being arranged for in certain cases.

In addition to the above-mentioned children, the Branch, in a special section of its preventive work, made inquiries into the living-conditions of some three hundred families, representing approximately 1,500 children, and was able in a number of cases to arrange for assistance to be given to preserve the family unit.

*Temporary Care of Children.*—During the year increased facilities were provided by private organizations for the temporary care of children during the day, arising mainly out of war conditions where the mother was in employment. In Auckland a scheme was inaugurated for the temporary placement in private homes of children whose mothers were absent from their homes through sickness necessitating their admission to hospital for a period. The organizations concerned have performed a very useful service to the community.

*Regulations.*—The general regulations covering institutions and the placement of children have been overhauled to bring them more into line with present practice, and it is hoped they will be reissued shortly. Draft regulations to cover street trading, employment of children, and attendance at places of entertainment are under consideration. There are many difficulties in the way, however, not the least of which is the lack of staff.

*British Children.*—At the 31st March the British children in New Zealand had been here for about three years and a half, long enough for them to adapt themselves completely to our conditions. They continue to be very happy, and there are indications that a number of them would like to stay here if their parents could join them. They are making good progress at their work and at school, and, generally speaking, have presented very few problems. This has been mainly due to the excellent homes they have had and