

to ascertaining whether the mother or the infant is in need of assistance. It is satisfactory to report that in the great majority of the cases the near relatives had made satisfactory arrangements for the care of the infants. Where this is done no further action is taken by our officers. An endeavour is always made to help the mother to keep her infant should she so desire. At times the child is committed to my care and the mother helped to maintain it. Often the mother marries later and then applies for her child, when the Department assists her with the adoption proceedings. Of the numbers born during the year, 56 were committed by the Courts, and, in addition, 105 others were committed during the year.

*Edward Costley Trust, Auckland.*—This Trust continues its good work. During the year the Trustees financially assisted 79 children in Auckland with educational courses, apprenticeships, &c. The Trustees require a report and recommendation in each case from the local District Child Welfare Officer. This Trust helps annually a large number of deserving young people, who, almost without exception, have shown their appreciation of what had been done by making the best use of the assistance granted.

*Special Schools.*—Schools for the Deaf: During the year the military authorities vacated the school premises at Sumner, and the children who had been previously in residence at temporary premises in Christchurch were transferred back to the main institution. It is still found necessary to continue the temporary premises acquired for the School at Titirangi, near Auckland. There was a considerable influx of new pupils, mostly young children, during the year, with the result that the North Island school is full to capacity, and the South Island one is also reaching this stage.

The roll numbers at the two schools combined rose from 126 in March, 1943, to 175 in March, 1944. Twenty-seven pupils left during the year, and of these, 15 are in employment, 4 are attending other schools, 1 pupil is to return when her health improves, 4 children proved unsuitable for tuition, and the remaining 3 are residing at home.

During the year three selected student teachers completed a third-year training-college course in the education of deaf children in the North Island school under the direction of the Principal, who reports that the Department's policy in providing adequate training for teachers of the deaf is being well rewarded, there being evidence already of improvement in the standard of work at the school to which the students were attached. Six students are taking the course in the coming year.

Considerable improvements were effected at the school at Sumner to make better provision for the staff and the pupils.

*Special Schools for Backward Children:* At the Special School for boys at Otekaieke, near Oamaru, there were 115 inmates in residence at the 31st March, 1944, 92 of whom were in the day-school section and 23 in the industrial department. Thirty-five new pupils were admitted during the year, and 45 children left and returned to ordinary life in the community. The Manager reports that, despite staff shortages, the training and recreational activities proceeded much as usual and that the health of the inmates during the year was good.

At the Special School for girls at Richmond, near Nelson, there were 65 girls in residence at the 31st March. The Principal reports that the health of the inmates was good and the usual programme of recreational activities was carried out.

Both these schools provide for those children who for various reasons cannot be catered for at special classes attached to public schools. At each school provision is made for continued occupational training for those who are retained beyond the ordinary school period.

*New Zealand Institute for the Blind:* This institute, situated at Auckland, is administered by a board of trustees, on which the Government is represented. Certain children not admitted by private arrangement are admitted as Government pupils. At the 31st March there were 24 such pupils in residence. This institute, besides providing a home and instruction for younger children, also provides a training programme for adults.

*Children's Courts and Delinquency.*—Reference to the attached Table 2 will show that during the year ended 31st March there was an increase of 5 only in the total number of children appearing before the Courts—3,076, as against 3,071 last year. This total includes children brought up on all counts, including indigency, neglect, living in detrimental environment, or not under proper control, as well as for offences. All those who appear on account of specific charges for offences are grouped together, and it will be noted that there was an increase of 47 in this group—2,493, as against 2,446 last year. The principal offence still continues to be theft. Of the total number of children appearing for offences 368 had appeared at some time previously for offences. The total for last year was 364. As stated in a previous report, however, we set no time-limit on the intervening period since the commission of the first offence, so that the figures should be read in the light of this stringent condition.

The increase of 47 in the numbers appearing for offences (which is about 2 per cent. on last year's figures) does not indicate an upward trend in delinquency generally, but accords fairly closely with the increased population in the age-groups concerned. A reference to Table 2 will show that this increase is largely accounted for by one class of offence—viz., breaking of telegraph insulators—which shows a rise from 86 to 122. On the year's figures, taking the total child population, inclusive of Maoris, in the ten to seventeen year age-group, the percentage of those who committed more serious offences is approximately 0.9. An analysis of the figures for theft and wilful damage discloses that these offences are more prevalent among boys than among girls and among Maoris than among whites. The trend in all groups with theft offences indicates that the important years are fourteen to sixteen, with the peak at fifteen. The rates for wilful damage and