

1946
NEW ZEALAND

EDUCATION:

CHILD WELFARE, STATE CARE OF CHILDREN, SPECIAL SCHOOLS, AND INFANT-LIFE PROTECTION

[In continuation of E.-4, 1945]

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

SIR,—

5th July, 1946.

I have the honour to present my report on the work of the Child Welfare Branch for the year ended 31st March, 1946. The main activities of the Branch are briefly as follows:—

- (1) Supervision and general placement and care of all children committed to the care of the Department through the Children's Courts:
- (2) Administration of State institutions for children and young people who cannot be placed in the community, including institutions for handicapped children:
- (3) Visiting and oversight of all children placed by the Courts under the legal supervision of Child Welfare Officers:
- (4) Investigation and reporting on all cases coming before Children's Courts:
- (5) Preventive work—that is, the inquiry in the early stages into cases of difficulty with children or of bad adjustment in the home, with a view to applying remedial measures or to arranging for assistance in cases of need:
- (6) Inquiries into cases of illegitimate births to ensure that proper provision is being made for each child, and for the mother where necessary:
- (7) Administration of the Infants Act (Part V), licensing of foster-parents, and supervision of infants placed in their homes:
- (8) Inquiry into and reporting to Courts on applications for adoption of children:
- (9) Registration and inspection of private institutions and children's homes.

STAFFING

Although the retirement of the Superintendent, Mr. J. R. McClune, did not take effect until after the close of the year under review, yet, as he actually ceased duty at the end of December last, it would hardly be appropriate to omit any reference to the matter from this report. Mr. McClune completed nearly forty-two years' service with the Department, following two years' teaching service with the Auckland Education Board, and had been Superintendent since early in 1938, when he succeeded Mr. John Beck, the first holder of that office under the Child Welfare Act. His long and close association with the work enabled Mr. McClune to bring to the position a trained mind, administrative ability, and a sympathetic insight into the problems of children needing care and attention. He placed particular emphasis on the preventive aspects of the work and endeavoured, with considerable success, to enlist the co-operation of all interested private persons and organizations.

During the year there were more than the usual number of retirements, due, no doubt, to the fact that the cessation of hostilities enabled officers to be released who would normally have retired earlier. Among these were Mr. G. B. Young, Child Welfare Officer

at Napier, Miss G. G. Meddins, Principal of the Special School for Girls at Richmond, and Mr. A. S. Sutton-Turner, on the clerical staff at Head Office. Mr. P. Goodwin, District Child Welfare Officer at Wellington, resigned on account of ill health. These and the other officers who retired have all given loyal and conscientious service to the Department.

The field staff has been strengthened by additional appointments, and this has afforded relief to those older officers who carried heavy case-loads during the war years. This relief was particularly needed in those country districts where, despite a large increase in the volume of work, staffing had remained for many years at the level of one male and one female officer. With the exception of one minor district and two sub-districts, all country districts have now been supplied with assistant field officers, both male and female.

The minimum educational requirement for appointees to the male field staff has been raised to University Entrance standard and appointees are expected to undertake courses of study at the University colleges with a view to improving their qualifications and usefulness. There is a creditable eagerness among the field staff to undertake this study. In addition, officers are encouraged to read literature relevant to the work, and publications are made available from the Department's library for this purpose. The demand for these indicates the need for extending the library facilities.

Plans have been made to open a new child welfare district at Taumarunui early in the coming year, and a further district will be established at Blenheim when circumstances permit.

HONORARY CHILD WELFARE OFFICERS

To assist the Department with the supervision of children in their own homes, with the adjustment of numerous local cases involving minor behaviour problems, domestic difficulties, and general preventive work, and with the handling in the Children's Courts away from the main centres of cases presenting no unusual difficulties or unlikely to result in decisions of a drastic nature, some 250 Honorary Child Welfare Officers hold office under authority given them by the Minister. Many valuable miscellaneous duties are carried out by these men and women, mainly in localities where the permanent officers are unable to visit frequently or at short notice, and the Department appreciates not only the quantity and quality of the voluntary service they render, but also the spirit and ideals prompting them to undertake a task which is of incalculable benefit to the community. It is understood, of course, that where, for various reasons, it may not be desirable for the honorary officer to act in a certain case, our permanent officers undertake the necessary action. The Honorary Child Welfare Officer system probably achieves its most satisfying results through the regular personal contact so necessary in remedial work with children, and it would be difficult to estimate just how detrimentally the whole work of the Branch would be affected if the assistance of these public-spirited officers were not available.

CHILD WELFARE INSTITUTIONS

Section 19 of the Child Welfare Act, 1925, provides that children are not to be permanently maintained in institutions save in exceptional cases. Although, in pursuance of this policy, the Department generally exhausts every possible alternative means in the community for treating a child in need of adjustment, it is recognized that institutions have an important place in the child welfare scheme. Apart from the need to provide temporary care for children pending their placement in suitable foster-homes, there are those problem cases requiring the special treatment which the foster-home cannot be expected to provide.

Great difficulty is still being experienced in finding sufficient foster-homes, and, mainly for this reason, accommodation available in the Department's institutions throughout the year has been fully taxed. At the 31st March there were 316 children in residence, as against 284 at the 31st March of the previous year. The following notes about the various institutions give an indication of their functions :—

Receiving Homes.—These homes, providing for young children of both sexes and for older girls, have been in existence for many years at Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin, Hamilton, and Napier. They serve as clearing houses for these districts and neighbouring areas by providing temporary accommodation for children pending their placement in or transfer to foster-homes or situations. Except where a need for some training is indicated, a child, as a rule, does not remain in a home for a lengthy period.

Boys' Homes.—At each of the four main centres the Department has boys' homes which provide generally for boys of school age who attend the ordinary schools in the community. Boys may be kept there for a few months' training. At times, when making an order for supervision by a Child Welfare Officer, a Magistrate may stipulate that part of the period to be spent in one of these homes. Boys who do not adjust themselves to placement in private foster-homes are also admitted to the homes for a period. Provision is made for a Housemaster to assist in the training of the boys and in particular to organize their out-of-school activities.

Hostels.—In Auckland the Department has a hostel for boys under its control who are working in the city. At the 31st March there were 16 boys in residence. This is the maximum number that can be accommodated at present, but arrangements have been completed for building extensions providing for additional accommodation and improved facilities. A Housemaster is attached to the staff.

A similar hostel exists in Wellington for girls in employment and for those requiring temporary accommodation while on transit from one district to another. There were 16 girls in residence at the 31st March; 26 were admitted during the year, and 26 girls left. Temporary accommodation was provided for 54 girls during the year.

The Matron's report indicates that a full programme of recreational activities has been carried out and that the girls have shown a keen interest in play readings and in hobbies such as sewing, knitting, fancywork, and other handicrafts. Several girls are attending dressmaking classes at the technical college. Health and conduct have been very satisfactory and the general tone of the hostel has been excellent.

Girls' Training Centre, Burwood, Christchurch.—This is a residential institution to which are admitted older girls who through failure to adjust themselves to life in the community require a more or less lengthy period of institutional training. The number of girls in residence at the 31st March was 64. It is the usual practice for a girl to be tried out in a private foster-home or in a receiving home before being admitted to the Training Centre, but it is sometimes necessary to send older girls direct from the Courts. The average period of training is approximately two years, and it is the practice, wherever possible, to try girls out at day service first before giving them the opportunity of taking a position in a private home in the ordinary way.

A hostel to accommodate staff and the day-service girls at the centre is nearing completion. It is hoped that this more suitable accommodation for these girls will make easier the transition from institution to the community.

A comprehensive recreational and educational programme of activities is provided for all the girls at the centre, and we are indebted to many interested private persons for their generous assistance in carrying it out. This includes instruction in physical education, handwork, music and drama, dancing, organized games, singing, and first aid.

Day-school instruction is provided at the institution for pupils of primary-school standard, and facilities are offered more advanced pupils to take secondary-school courses by correspondence under the supervision of a Housemistress. An increasing number of girls request the opportunity of taking a secondary-school course. The centre is visited regularly by the school Inspectors.

The following are extracts taken from the Principal's report :—

The girls have continued to be instructed in cooking, laundrywork, sewing, cutting and fitting of coats and frocks, gardening, and general housecraft.

A drama class has been held and plays and tableaux produced. For these the girls, with the assistance of the staff, made period dresses and stage sets manufactured from old black-out screens and wallpaper.

During the year 12 girls received their home nursing and 10 their first-aid certificates.

Handwork has included pottery, spinning, weaving, fancywork, toy-making, and knitting.

A refugee sewing club was organized in each house during the winter and the clothes and toys were sent to the Red Cross for forwarding.

To send food to Britain the girls have contributed from their pocket-money and earned extra money by clearing the hostel area of lupin and poplar saplings.

Twenty-one girls have earned their swimming certificates during the year.

We have been fortunate in having visit the centre concert parties arranged by various drama groups and friends in the community. This has encouraged the girls to arrange their own concerts, which have been well attended by outside visitors.

Dr. Field, as Psychological Adviser, has visited the centre fortnightly, interviewed the more unstable and difficult girls, and given advice regarding treatment . . . His advice to the staff is much appreciated and his interviews with girls give noticeable results.

In spite of epidemics in this district, the health of the girls at the centre has been extremely good.

Boys' Training Centre, Levin.—(a) Senior Section: This institution for older boys is a counterpart of the Girls' Training Centre at Burwood. The age for admission ranges from fourteen to nineteen years approximately and the period of training varies from six to eighteen months according to the needs of the individual boy. During the twelve months ended 31st March, 1946, 65 boys were admitted and 54 were placed out. Of the latter, 48 were either placed in employment or returned to relatives or friends, 1 was admitted to a mental hospital, and 5 were transferred to a Borstal institution. At the 31st March there were 57 boys in residence.

The scheme of training includes farming in various branches, woodwork, and a certain amount of instruction in mechanics.

A well-planned programme of leisure-time occupations, including cultural and recreational activities, is directed towards the social readjustment of the individual boy.

(b) Hokio Training School: The Hokio Section of the Training Centre, situated a few miles from the Senior Section, is a residential school for boys of primary-school age who prove too difficult for continued residence in or admission to a boys' home. While attached to the Training Centre for administrative purposes, provisioning, &c., this unit, as far as possible, has a separate entity, with a training scheme suitable for younger boys and distinct from that operating in the Senior Section.

There were 17 boys in residence at the school at the 31st March.

Extracts from the report of the Manager of the Training Centre are as follows:—

During practically the whole period the accommodation at the Senior Section has been fully taxed, but at no time has there been any great difficulty experienced in securing suitable placements for those due to leave.

I am pleased to be able to report that many members of the staff who have been on active service during the war are now returning to duty at the centre.

An analysis of the family conditions existing in the homes from which were drawn the last hundred admissions to the centre shows the following position:—

Broken Home Relationships.				Previously residing with Both Parents.			
No parents	..	..	5	Mother bad character	..	..	2
Father dead	..	..	17	Father bad character	..	..	3
Mother dead	..	..	20	Control weak	..	..	6
Parents separated	..	..	10	Congested area	..	..	2
Parents divorced	..	..	11	Normal (including 4 Maori homes)	..	..	9
Father overseas	..	..	2	Mother working	..	..	3
One parent an invalid	..	..	10				
			75				25

Information about the last hundred boys discharged from the centre discloses the following position:—

Good	..	..	68	Other institutions	..	..	1
Unsatisfactory	..	..	19	Readmitted	..	..	4
Unknown	..	..	3	Missing	..	..	1
Mental hospital	..	..	2	Deceased	..	..	2

This, I think, can be regarded as extremely satisfactory, bearing in mind that the whole hundred cases were classified as troublesome and delinquent upon admission.

As to sport and recreation, an unexpected feature is the quite high percentage of boys who show no desire to take part in any sport whatever. Despite this, however, the centre fielded four American indoor basketball teams, two softball teams, and, in addition to one football team, frequently provided players to augment one of the local third-grade teams. With the exception of football, the teams were entered in the district competition, and it is pleasing to record that one of the softball teams was close runner-up in the district finals.

The general standard of health at the centre is still high, there being the minimum of ills and a complete absence throughout the year of any epidemic sickness. It is still the practice to have all new boys examined by both a doctor and a dentist at the earliest possible time.

The buildings at Hokio are in need of alteration, and this matter is now under consideration. At the Senior Section the main buildings have been maintained in good condition and, with the grounds, present a very pleasing picture. The new wing, comprising sixteen cubicles, has been completed and is now in use. The whole of this work was done by the boys under the direction of the staff, and it is a very creditable job.

Due largely to the difficulty experienced in finding suitable board homes for boys of school age, the Hokio Section has generally little empty accommodation, the roll number being close upon the maximum of twenty for the greater portion of the year.

Fareham House, Featherston.—This institution, which provides for older Maori girls requiring training before placement in the community, has now been operating for over a year and results have been very satisfactory. Accommodation is still limited owing to building alterations not having been completed. There were 11 girls in residence at the 31st March.

The programme of training includes domestic work in all its branches, indoor crafts, gardening, and small farming.

After a period of training depending upon the capabilities and responsibilities of the individual girls, they are placed in suitable situations, where their supervision is continued under the local Child Welfare Officer.

An extract from the Principal's report reads as follows :—

During the year the girls exhibited in the domestic section at the Wairarapa East Coast Show and gained prizes in the cooking and handwork sections.

All girls are linked with Church choirs in their respective Churches and all are members of the local Fellowship Club, which meets fortnightly. One girl is a committee member, and periodically the Fareham House girls are responsible for the programme, when they feature their Maori songs and dances.

New Institutions.—A new receiving home will be opened in Palmerston North early in the ensuing year. It will serve more particularly the needs of the Manawatu, Wanganui, and Taranaki districts.

SPECIAL SCHOOLS

Schools for Backward Children.—The Special School for Boys at Otekaieke, near Oamaru, and the Special School for Girls at Richmond, near Nelson, provide for children who, being mentally retarded, cannot for one reason or another be taught at the ordinary school or provided for at a special class.

The curriculum in these schools is designed to meet the needs of the pupils, and handwork in a wide variety of forms is given prominence.

The Manager at Otekaieke reports as follows :—

At the 31st March, 1946, the number of boys in residence was 122; of these, 89 were in the day school and 33 in the industrial section. Thirty-eight new pupils were admitted during the year, 39 boys left the institution, and 1 died. Of those who left, 30 returned to active life in the community and 9 were found to be unsuitable for special school training; of these, 7 were transferred to a custodial home and 2 to the Boys' Training Centre, Levin.

The average chronological age of the boys in the day school was 12 years 10 months, average mental age 9 years 1 month, and the average I.Q., 71.3; and in the industrial group, 17 years 2 months, 10 years 1 month, and 63 respectively.

Despite the shortage of staff, the training and recreational activities have proceeded as usual.

Again we are indebted to the members of the Oamaru Branch of Toc H and several visitors for providing entertainments for the children.

The health of the inmates during the year was good.

The following is an extract from the report of the Principal at Richmond :—

At the 1st April, 1946, there were 51 girls in residence and 1 girl on holiday. At the same time last year 63 girls were in residence, the decrease being in the house-training section, as the numbers of the school section remain fairly constant with a small waiting-list. During the year there were 17 new admissions, 15 pupils were returned to relatives or friends, 1 was discharged, 4 went to board or service in other districts, 3 were transferred to the Girls' Hostel, Wellington, and 7 to other appropriate institutions.

In spite of staff shortages and changes, the work of the school has been satisfactorily carried on and, except for an epidemic of measles, the health of the girls has been good. Continued use has been made of films and the Country Library Service, and classes are taken into Nelson for cooking instruction at the technical college and also for speech therapy at the newly established clinic. The school team played with considerable success in the combined schools' basketball competition throughout the season, and the Junior Red Cross Circle supplied flowers and vegetables for the sick from their school gardens and also made toys for distribution at the hospital.

On the 21st April, 1945, the school was honoured by a visit from their Excellencies, Sir Cyril and Lady Newall, who were entertained by the girls with a short musical programme and latter inspected the school and the girls' handwork.

Schools for the Deaf.—There are two residential schools—one at Sumner, near Christchurch, and the other at Titirangi, near Auckland.

The latter school was opened during the war period in temporary premises which were the most suitable of those available at the time. It is hoped that the erection of a new school to make better provision for these children will be proceeded with in the near future.

On the 31st March, 1946, there were 238 pupils on the rolls of the two schools. It is interesting to note how the enrolments of children for the schools for the deaf have grown in recent years. At the 31st March, 1940, when there was only one school, there were 103 pupils, and in subsequent years the figures were : 1941, 117 ; 1942, 110 ; 1943 (two schools), 126 ; 1944, 175 ; 1945, 215 ; and 1946, 238.

There were 42 new admissions during the year, 18 pupils left, and 1 died. Of the 238 pupils, 133 are boys and 105 girls. Of the 42 new admissions, 34 were congenitally deaf or became deaf before reaching school age. The average age on admission was 5.9 years.

During the year 1 male and 4 female students were selected for the specialized course at the Auckland Teachers' Training College in education of the deaf and they will become available for appointment in February, 1947.

The Principal reports that the health of the children at both schools was fairly satisfactory, although at Sumner there were cases of measles, chicken-pox, and scarlet-fever, and at Titirangi the incidence of measles was very high.

REGISTERED CHILDREN'S HOMES

Eighty children's homes are conducted by private organizations registered under the provisions of the Child Welfare Amendment Act, 1927. These homes are subject to inspection by officers of the Child Welfare Branch. At the end of last year there were, according to their returns, a total of 2,685 children in residence, as against 2,790 the previous year.

It was reported that in the case of 155 children both parents were deceased, in 257 cases the fathers were deceased, and in 518 cases the mothers were deceased. It is understood that in many other cases the parents were separated or were missing.

In some of the homes necessary improvements to buildings have been held over owing to war conditions. The authorities are, however, fully alive to the position and intend to proceed as soon as circumstances permit. Officers of the Health Department gave valuable assistance in many cases with recommendations regarding dietary and other matters affecting the health and general welfare of the children.

PLACEMENT IN FOSTER-HOMES

If for any reason a child cannot be brought up by his own parents in his own home, then the Department considers that the next best thing is for him to live in some one else's home under reasonably natural conditions, and only as a last alternative or in exceptional circumstances should he be admitted to an institution.

The Department's policy is governed by this view, and its boarding-out system, which has been in operation for over sixty years, not only has justified its continued use on the results achieved but also is in accord with the practice now generally followed overseas.

When a child has to be admitted to an institution after committal, then, as stated earlier in this report, an endeavour is made to restrict the period to as short a time as possible. Usually no time is lost in finding a foster-home which will provide an environment and a type of control suited to the needs of the individual child, although it is regrettable to report that for various reasons a sufficiency of suitable foster-homes has not been available during the war years and the immediate post-war period. This has caused the Department some concern, and it is hoped that a return to more normal conditions generally will effect some improvement in the position.

Due care is exercised by the Department's officers in selecting foster-homes, and, after the placement of children in them, adequate safeguards are maintained to ensure firstly, that the officers have not been misled by an erroneous and superficial impression which is not justified on further acquaintance, and, secondly, that the home does not deteriorate to a stage when it no longer merits approval. It would be too much to expect that perfection could be attained in these matters and it is not surprising that unsatisfactory placements sometimes occur, particularly considering the difficult children occasionally to be placed; but, despite this, the Department's record of foster-home placement is one from which it derives considerable satisfaction. Frequent visits by the officers, augmented by supervision on the spot by honorary officers and at school by teachers, give the Department the opportunity of checking up on the treatment of the children, but it is pleasing to be able to state that occasions are commendably rare when serious deficiencies are revealed. Foster-parents are deserving of high praise for taking on themselves this worth-while community job, and although the board rates are good and the Department assists in other ways, yet it is appreciated that something more than the material recompenses of the task impels people to assume these obligations. The satisfaction which comes of helping a child with an unhappy start in life to become a decent and useful citizen is one of the benefits derived by foster-parents, and enjoyment of the companionship of growing children is another. With these thoughts in mind, it will be realized that a substantial increase in the number of foster-homes will be of mutual advantage to the children and the prospective foster-parents.

At the 31st March, 1946, there were 1,924 children placed in foster-homes. This is the lowest figure for many years. For a long period up to 1943 the figure was above the 2,000 mark, but since that year the annual figures have been 1,980, 1,976, and now 1,924.

EDUCATION

Children under the guardianship of the State have the same opportunities as other children of receiving primary and higher education. With the exception of a small number of children whose education is provided for at institutions, State wards attend the ordinary schools in the community. Children are encouraged to continue with their post-primary schooling whenever this is justified, and pupils with special aptitudes are assisted by the Department to attend University.

At the 31st March, 1946, 283 of the children placed in foster-homes were receiving post-primary education and 7 Maori children were residential pupils at Maori colleges.

PLACEMENT IN EMPLOYMENT

State wards, if normal children, are placed in employment at standard rates of wages. In some cases, however, where children are so handicapped physically or mentally that they cannot compete on equal terms with their fellow-workers of the same age, under-rate workers permits are obtained through the local officers of the Labour Department. In these cases their placement in the right environment is regarded as being of paramount importance.

When a child is not self-supporting, as when commencing an apprenticeship at a low rate of wages, he is regarded as on the status of "assisted service." The Department supplies his needs in clothing, dental attention, &c., and his wages are subsidized to enable him to meet his living-expenses and retain a reasonable amount of pocket-money. The subsidy is reviewed when the child receives an increase in wages and it ultimately ceases, although it is usually necessary to continue assistance with clothing, &c., for a further period.

Those children placed in employment where board and lodging is supplied, such as in farming situations for boys and in domestic situations for girls, are regarded as on "service" status. An agreement is entered into between the employer and the Department which provides, *inter alia*, for the wages to be allocated as (a) pocket-money, and (b) the balance, to be placed in a trust account in the child's name but operated on by the Superintendent.

The Department supplies free an initial outfit, but the cost of replacements and other subsequent expenditure are debited against the trust account.

Pocket-money is increased as higher wages are received and the child's needs grow greater. One of the objects of this is to train the child to appreciate the value of money, to spend it wisely, and to purchase his own clothing under supervision. As a prelude to discharge from control, which generally occurs at about the eighteenth year, he is placed for a period of six months or longer on the status of "service agreement." This means that he receives all his wages and can choose his own situations, except that his supervising officer must approve of his place of employment.

Upon discharge from control there is usually a fairly substantial credit balance in the trust account. This may be paid over at any time, but the Department as trustee endeavours to guide these young people in investing or utilizing their money to the best advantage. This is essential in those cases where the young people concerned may be mentally retarded and require in their own interests friendly supervision for a longer period than is necessary with normal youths.

NATURE OF EMPLOYMENT

At the 31st March, 1946, there were 1,069 State wards (682 boys and 387 girls) in employment. Of these, 84 (82 boys and 2 girls) were apprenticed to various trades and, of the total number, 336 (192 boys and 144 girls) were receiving assistance from the Department. Boys were employed as follows: farm hands, 356; factory hands, 73; shop-assistants, 24; labourers, 21; and the remainder, 208, in various other occupations. Girls were employed as follows: domestics, 165; factory hands, 67; shop-assistants, 37; clerks, 21; nurses, 14; and the remainder, 83, in various other occupations.

COMMITTALS AND ADMISSIONS

The number of committals by Courts was 94 fewer than the previous year—446, as against 540. Private admissions by arrangement with parents were slightly more—146, as against 142.

DISCHARGES FROM CONTROL

A total of 588 children were discharged during the year, the average age at discharge being fifteen years and ten months. They had either reached an age when they could fend for themselves or were no longer in need of care or oversight by the Department. Many of them while still quite young returned to their relatives or friends. In special cases where the young person may need continued help from the Department control is retained up to the age of twenty or twenty-one years. These are cases of mental or physical handicap or cases in which the individual requires assistance with his training course.

ILLEGITIMATE BIRTHS

Section 41 of the Child Welfare Act, 1925, requires Registrars of Births to notify nominated Child Welfare Officers of all illegitimate births. It is then the duty of these officers to make confidential inquiry into each case with a view to ensuring that the infant is adequately provided for and also to assist the mother where necessary with advice about affiliation proceedings, securing employment when fit, the infant's placement, or other relevant matter. The Superintendent of Child Welfare may, on the written application of the mother, help her to establish paternity and to secure a maintenance order. Often no other action is called for beyond the initial inquiry, since in the majority of cases either the mother or other relatives make suitable arrangements.

An endeavour is made to keep the child and its mother together or to have the infant so placed that the mother can continue her interest in her baby. In only a small proportion of cases is it necessary for the infant to be committed to the care of the State. A large number of illegitimate children are adopted.

During the year ended 31st March, 1946, 1,606 illegitimate births were notified to the Child Welfare Officers. Of these infants, 719 were residing with their mothers and 37 with other relatives, 62 were committed to the care of the State, 276 were in registered foster-homes or nursing homes, and 362 were adopted. In a number of cases inquiries have not been completed or the child died.

The number of illegitimate births as recorded by the Registrar-General over the period 1st January to the 31st December, 1945, was 1,824, as against 2,020 for the previous year, a decrease of 196. The difference between our total and that supplied by the Registrar-General—1,606 as against 1,824—is no doubt due in part to the different periods represented and also perhaps to the time lag between recording and notification. In last year's report reference was made to the increase then recorded in the number of illegitimate births, and it was contended that war conditions were no doubt responsible for the major part of the increase. As I am suggesting in another part of this report, when commenting on the drop in the number of Children's Court appearances, any decrease noted this year could be largely ascribed to the return to more normal conditions. It would be reasonable to expect that the quite substantial reduction recorded in illegitimacy figures will be maintained as general conditions further improve.

INFANT-LIFE PROTECTION

By virtue of Part V of the Infants Act, 1908, it is unlawful for any person to maintain apart from its parents any child under the age of six years for a longer period than seven consecutive days unless that person is licensed as a foster-parent. The administration of these legislative provisions falls on the Child Welfare Branch, and in actual practice the inspection of homes, the issuing of the licenses, and the subsequent supervision of the children in the homes is carried out by the women field officers. In each of the main centres the volume of work involved in these duties requires the full-time services of one officer. The children concerned do not become State wards because of the licensing, and their maintenance is still primarily the responsibility of their relatives, but the agreements for payment of maintenance must be approved by the Superintendent or his authorized officer. The Child Welfare Amendment Act, 1927, makes provision for these agreements to be registered if necessary at a Magistrate's Court, and they thus become, in effect, maintenance orders enforceable under the Destitute Persons Act, 1910.

At the 31st March, 1946, there were 826 licensed foster-homes and the number of infants placed in them was 909. Many of these children return later to their relatives, some remain in their foster-homes after attaining the age of six years, and in some cases the child is adopted by its foster-parents.

ADOPTIONS

Magistrates avail themselves of the services of Child Welfare Officers to obtain reports on applications made under Part III of the Infants Act, 1908, for the legal adoption of children. As far as possible, the officers satisfy themselves that the adopting parents are generally suitable, that any special needs of the individual child will be provided for, and that the proposed adoption will be in the interests of the child. Usually a probationary period in the foster-home is regarded as essential before adoption is recommended. Children may be legally adopted up to the age of twenty-one years, but there is usually some special reason for such a step being taken with those nearing that age.

The number of adoptions completed in the year ending 31st December, 1945, was 1,151. This shows an increase over the figure for the previous year, 1,065, and it is by far the highest for any one year yet recorded in this country. Ten years before, in 1935, the total was 316, which was near the average figure for earlier years, and it was not until 1937 that the 400 mark was passed for the first time. Thereafter there was a steady rise. In 1938 there were 516 adoptions, and in succeeding years the totals were 518, 604, 605, 685, 854, 1,065, and now 1,151. It would be largely a matter of conjecture to attempt to account for this remarkable and in many respects pleasing increase, but there is little doubt that the publicity given in the press during recent years to the legal adoption of children has had some influence on the position. There is evidence, too, that many adoptions come about because (a) the adopting parents had no children of their own, (b) they wished to have a companion for their only child, and (c) the mother of an illegitimate child adopted her own child upon subsequent marriage. It has usually been the case in recent years that the applications from prospective adopting parents outnumber the children available for adoption. This is particularly so in the case of very young babies.

Although there is provision in the Act for premiums to pass at adoption, it is rare that any such consideration passes. There were only 5 such cases last year.

As a rule, applications to adopt infant girls predominate, but the orders actually made reflect the numbers and sex of the children available. Last year 586 girls and 565 boys were adopted.

Of the 1,151 children adopted, 973 (492 boys and 481 girls) were illegitimate.

CHILDREN'S COURTS

Children's Courts were established in New Zealand with the passing of the Child Welfare Act, 1925. Prior to this date there were in existence juvenile Courts working under the provisions of the Justices of the Peace Act, 1908, but these were in practice largely a replica of the Magistrate's Court. The 1925 Act endeavoured, as far as practicable, to separate the Children's Court from the Magistrate's Court, and it came to be looked upon more as a Court of adjustment than a Court of justice. Proceedings take place elsewhere than in a Court room, they are private, and they cannot be reported in the newspapers except under certain rigid conditions. The procedure followed is for the most part informal and it varies according to the wishes of individual Magistrates, all of whom have to be given special jurisdiction to sit in a Children's Court. The Court has power to deal with children up to the age of seventeen years on complaints under the Child Welfare Act or for all offences other than murder or manslaughter. It may also deal with cases of children seventeen years of age and under eighteen if such cases are expressly referred to it from a higher Court.

Before any case can be heard in a Children's Court the presiding Magistrate must be furnished with a full report from a Child Welfare Officer on the child and his environment.

As one of the means of coping with the many problems of child welfare, the Children's Courts form an important part of our child welfare system. Not only do they provide the machinery for dealing at one stage with juvenile offenders and other children in need of the care of the State, in respect to both of whom legal requirements need to be satisfied, but also they frequently contribute in no small measure to the

successful adjustment of children appearing before them. At the same time, there is wide scope for the undertaking of preventive measures before the need for Court action arises, and it is to this aspect of its work that the Child Welfare Branch is paying increasing attention.

The practice of the Courts in using the provisions of the Child Welfare Act to place children under the supervision of Child Welfare Officers for stated periods has continued to produce satisfactory results. There were 824 supervision orders made last year.

(1) *Total Appearances*.—In last year's report a substantial decrease was noted in the figures for all children appearing before the Children's Courts. It is gratifying to record that this downward trend has been maintained during the past year. Table 2 shows a decrease of 289 in these figures—2,240, as against 2,529 for the previous year. This represents a reduction of approximately 11 per cent.

(2) *Analysis of Total Appearances*.—(a) Complaints under the Child Welfare Act: Children appearing under this section were indigent, not under proper control, living in a detrimental environment, or neglected. There were 454 cases, as against 517 for the previous year and 583 for the 1943–44 year. This represents reductions of approximately 12 per cent. and 11 per cent. respectively, or a total reduction over the past two years of 22 per cent. Further analysis shows that this reduction lies mainly in the "not under proper control" group.

(b) *Offences*: The total numbers of appearances before the Courts for all offences, including breaches of special Acts, regulations, and by-laws, over the past three years are as follows: 1943–44, 2,493; 1944–45, 2,012; and 1945–46, 1,786. These numbers show reductions of 19 per cent. and 11 per cent. respectively, or a total reduction over the two years of 28 per cent.

The decrease is reflected generally in the figures for all types of offences, including those against morality and against the person, but the most marked decrease is found in the figures for theft, which, from 1,132 in the year 1943–44, dropped to 993 for 1944–45 and to 847 for last year.

The total of appearances for breaches of special Acts, traffic regulations, and by-laws is 237, as against 281 and 406 for the 1944–45 and 1943–44 periods respectively. This is a reduction of approximately 15 per cent. from the figures for 1944–45 and a total reduction over the two years of 42 per cent.

(3) *District Court Appearances*.—The decrease for total Court appearances reflects generally the position in the separate child welfare districts. Only four districts, Hamilton-Rotorua, New Plymouth, Wellington, and Dunedin, recorded increases on the figures for the previous year.

For offences, increases are recorded in the Hamilton-Rotorua, New Plymouth, Masterton, and Wellington areas, all other centres showing decreases, slight in some cases but marked in others.

(4) *Possible Reasons for Decrease*.—In last year's report several conditions were suggested as possibly helping to explain the decrease then recorded, which, it was hoped, indicated a return to more normal conditions. These were the lessening of war tension, the return of fathers to their homes from military duties, the work of visiting teachers, and the intensified preventive work of the Branch. Such conditions have now obtained for two years. In addition, an improvement in the man-power position following the cessation of hostilities has enabled the field staff to be strengthened, with advantage to the Department's preventive programme.

(5) *Repeaters*.—The number of children who, on appearing before the Courts last year, were making a second or subsequent appearance for offences was 339. The corresponding numbers for the three previous years were: 1943, 364; 1944, 368; and 1945, 302. In selecting these cases a very wide interpretation is given to the term "repeater." No time limit is set between the child's first and second or subsequent Court appearance for offences, nor is the degree of seriousness of an offence taken into account. The totals include, therefore, many cases of offences of a minor nature, and frequently a considerable period has expired before an appearance at Court is repeated.

(6) *Trend over Recent Years.*—Juvenile delinquency is a subject in which the public is developing an increasing interest.

The abnormal general conditions obtaining in most countries throughout the war and immediate post-war years have provided an opportunity for much speculation on juvenile delinquency, and the tendency during the war years to adopt an alarmist attitude about the position in New Zealand still persists in some quarters. This is not justified by recorded evidence, and a continuation of such an attitude could only be based on false general impressions.

The tables in respect to Court appearances published every year in this report furnish data which is the best available guide to the trend over the years. In any system of recording, allowance must be made for the possibility of variation both in methods used in various districts and in the interpreting and recording of the reasons for a child's appearance at Court. It is necessary to assume, therefore, that these variations, while possibly having a slight effect upon incidence rates, remain sufficiently constant from year to year to have no appreciable effect upon the value of the figures as a reliable guide to general trends.

On the basis of total Court appearances for offences the position over the last nine years is as follows: 1938, 2,447; 1939, 2,248; 1940, 2,464; 1941, 2,424; 1942, 2,421; 1943, 2,446; 1944, 2,493; 1945, 2,012; 1946, 1,786. Expressed in rates per 10,000 of the juvenile population (aged seven to seventeen years), the position is: 1938, 85; 1939, 79; 1940, 87; 1941, 87; 1942, 88; 1943, 90; 1944, 93; 1945, 75; 1946, 66.

By analysis of the tables, similar comparisons can be made in the annual figures for the different types of offences. For instance, the figures appearing under the heading "Theft" (which, while representing only those children actually charged with the offence of theft, amount to almost half the number of total offences) compare as follows: 1938, 957; 1939, 818; 1940, 1,049; 1941, 1,121; 1942, 1,037; 1943, 1,127; 1944, 1,132; 1945, 993; 1946, 847. Expressed in rates per 10,000 of the juvenile population (aged seven to seventeen years), the position is: 1938, 33; 1939, 29; 1940, 37; 1941, 40; 1942, 37; 1943, 41; 1944, 42; 1945, 37; 1946, 31.

Further, a selection may be made from the tables of particular groups representing the more serious cases. Any such selection is, of course, purely arbitrary, but in practice investigators are in general agreement as to what constitutes the more serious offences. If, then, for the purpose of indicating trend in regard to the more serious cases, we take in the offences in Table 2 under the first six headings (against morality, against the person, theft, conversion of motor-vehicles, other conversions, and delinquent) and omit offences under miscellaneous, breaches of special Acts, regulations, and by-laws, we find the position over the last nine years as follows: 1938, 1,313; 1939, 1,245; 1940, 1,507; 1941, 1,437; 1942, 1,469; 1943, 1,593; 1944, 1,614; 1945, 1,402; 1946, 1,243. Expressed in rates per 10,000 of the juvenile population (ages seven to seventeen years), the position is: 1938, 46; 1939, 44; 1940, 53; 1941, 51; 1942, 53; 1943, 59; 1944, 60; 1945, 52; 1946, 46.

The above indicates the trend over the last nine years. The figures for the war years, 1940 to 1945 inclusive, show a gradual upward trend to the peak year in 1944. This is no more than could reasonably have been expected and compares very favourably with the position in other countries, where generally a steeper rise was experienced.

Over the last two years the trend has been sharply downwards, and it would appear safe to assert not only that the wartime increase has been checked, but also that there has been a return to the pre-war rate. While this gives cause for satisfaction, it provides no excuse for apathy, but rather presents a challenge to parents, to all persons and agencies serving the interests of children, and to the community generally to make a greater effort to maintain and, if possible, improve the relatively favourable position now obtaining.

PREVENTIVE WORK

Reference has already been made to this most important aspect of the child welfare programme.

We endeavour by all available means to adjust the conditions affecting a potentially delinquent child in his home and in the community so that he will develop good habits. In this way it is hoped to avert the possibility of Court appearances. Besides this, we seek to assist the handicapped child in any way which will help him to overcome the effects of his disadvantages. In the course of this preventive work it is obvious that attention must be paid not only to individual cases, but also to general social measures.

The Child Welfare Officer when visiting the home to investigate conditions endeavours as a first essential to gain the confidence of the parents and enlist their co-operation, without which little can be done. Fortunately, in the majority of cases it has been found that parents welcome and adopt sympathetic suggestions and advice regarding the training of their children. If necessary, the assistance of outside agencies is utilized in helping to bring about a satisfactory adjustment. In cases presenting unusual difficulties the expert services of psychologists attached to the Department or to the University colleges and of psychiatrists attached to the Mental Hospitals Department are available and are freely utilized in both our preventive and our Court work.

The number of children being dealt with under "preventive" supervision during the year was 1,629.

I am satisfied that as a result of these preventive measures many children are kept from committing offences, and in this way the need for Court appearances is avoided. To ensure the best results, however, it is essential, when symptoms of incipient maladjustment are observed, that appropriate measures be undertaken at the earliest possible stage.

Further, it must be recognized that the well-being of children and the safeguarding of their interests can never be the responsibility entirely of any one section of the community and that the best results can be obtained only by securing the fullest co-operation of all, including parents, teachers, clergymen, police, Court officials, social-service organizations, and private citizens having the interests of young people at heart. It is the Department's endeavour to foster this co-operation.

The provision of funds by the Government in recent years to enable the Branch to carry out more effectively the "preventive" section of its activities has been of vital importance in this social constructive work. Practical assistance given at the time when it is most needed is of first importance in dealing with families who, through misfortune or other sufficient cause, are in need of material help. The effects of this policy are far-reaching, as improved conditions tend not only to preserve the family unit, but also to eliminate those factors in the home which may easily lead to disruption and eventually to child delinquency.

EDWARD COSTLEY TRUST, AUCKLAND

During the year the trustees financially assisted 47 children in the Auckland district with educational courses, apprenticeships, &c. This assistance took the form of grants for books, school uniforms, fees, travelling-expenses, and clothing, and was granted upon favourable recommendations being received from the District Child Welfare Officer, who made careful inquiry into each application. The majority of the children helped were fatherless or the parents were not in a position at the time to provide the necessary help.

The assistance given was highly appreciated by the parents and the children themselves, and is looked upon by this Department as a most valuable adjunct to child welfare services in the community.

BRITISH CHILDREN IN NEW ZEALAND

On the 31st March, 1946, there were 46 British children remaining in New Zealand, a total of 145 having returned to the United Kingdom during the year. Although the official Children's Overseas Reception Board Scheme terminated at the end of 1945, it was deemed advisable to keep in force the British Children Regulations in the meantime, so that some measure of official oversight could be retained over those children

remaining in the Dominion. These children are waiting either to complete examination courses or until their parents can join them, but in a few cases they have expressed their intention of remaining here indefinitely, regardless of their parents' future movements.

The children who returned to the United Kingdom left in three main groups, and on each occasion the opportunity was taken to accord them an official farewell, in which the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom and representatives of the New Zealand Government took part. On these occasions, and subsequently by letter, the foster-parents of all the children were thanked for the outstanding humanitarian service they rendered by taking these children into their homes and accepting responsibility for their well-being.

It is pleasing to be able to record the great success of the scheme as it operated in New Zealand. The children who came here, almost without exception, made excellent progress and obviously benefited by their stay in this country. Many of them who returned to the United Kingdom have already indicated their desire to emigrate to New Zealand at the earliest opportunity and, if possible, to bring their relatives with them.

C. E. PEEK, Superintendent.

The Director of Education, Wellington, New Zealand.

TABLE 1.—NUMBER OF CHILDREN UNDER CONTROL AND SUPERVISION

The total number of children under the supervision of the Child Welfare Branch as at the 31st March, 1946, was 8,048, classified under the following headings, the corresponding number for the previous year being also given :—

	1944-45.	1945-46.
<i>State Wards—</i>		
In foster-homes and with friends	2,502	2,444
In situations (includes 6 absent without leave at 31st March, 1945, and 16 at 31st March, 1946)	1,022	1,006
In Government institutions, receiving homes, &c.	285	316
In private institutions	108	105
In Roman Catholic institutions recognized under Child Welfare Act	90	82
In special schools for mentally backward children (see also pupils under "Other than State Wards")	139	129
In refuges or cognate institutions	59	49
In hospital, convalescent homes, &c.	36	40
In residential colleges, &c.	17	13
	4,258	4,184
<i>Other than State Wards—</i>		
Young persons supervised by Child Welfare Officers in their own homes, with relatives, or friends, pursuant to orders of Court	1,063	1,026
Infants supervised in foster-homes registered under the Infants Act	799	909
Pupils at Schools for Deaf, Sumner and Titirangi	215	238
Pupils at schools for mentally backward children (Otekaikae and Richmond), (see also under "State Wards")	47	45
Children supervised as preventive cases	1,905	1,629
Children in New Zealand Institute for Blind for whom the Department makes payment	20	17
	4,049	3,864
	8,307	8,048
British children in New Zealand	191	46

Children in Mental Hospitals.—During the year ended 31st March, 1946, 28 State wards were admitted to mental hospitals. At that date there were a total of 161 State wards in these institutions, as against 147 at 31st March, 1945. In accordance with an arrangement with the Mental Hospitals Department, these children are not discharged from our legal control, as in the event of their return to the community the Department is enabled to resume control and assist where required.

TABLE 2.—NUMBER OF CHILDREN APPEARING BEFORE CHILDREN'S COURTS
(Classified according to complaints or charges laid)

—							1943-44.	1944-45.	1945-46.
Complaints under Child Welfare Act—									
Indigent	..	..	..	..	..	..	145	168	165
Not under proper control	..	..	..	..	..	..	280	238	172
Living in a detrimental environment	..	..	..	..	..	..	106	52	76
Neglected	..	..	..	..	..	..	52	59	41
							583	517	454
Offences—									
(1) Against morality	..	..	..	..	..	..	10	9	6
(2) Against the person	..	..	..	..	..	..	61	69	56
(3) Theft	..	..	..	..	..	..	1,132	993	847
(4) Conversion of motor-vehicles	..	..	..	..	..	..	65	49	48
(5) Other conversions	..	..	..	..	..	..	79	48	55
(6) Delinquent	..	..	..	..	..	..	267	234	231
(7) Miscellaneous (chiefly mischief)	..	..	..	..	..	..	449	316	296
(8) Breaches of Court supervision order	..	..	..	..	..	..	24	13	10
(9) Breaches of special Acts and regulations—									
(a) Railways	..	..	..	..	..	..	6	14	5
(b) Fire brigade	..	..	..	..	..	..	4	4	7
(c) Acclimatization	..	..	..	..	..	..	4	9	2
(d) Licensing	..	..	..	..	..	..	29	12	20
(e) Arms	..	..	..	..	..	..	50	37	41
(f) Post and Telegraph	..	..	..	..	..	..	122	67	18
(g) Shipping	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	6	2
(h) Emergency War Regulations	..	..	..	..	..	..	4	..	1
(i) Man-power Regulations	..	..	..	..	..	..	3	1	..
(j) Venereal Disease Regulations	..	..	..	..	..	..	4	1	..
(k) Immigration	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1
(10) Breaches of Traffic Regulations—									
(a) Cycles	..	..	..	..	..	..	47	49	71
(b) Motor-vehicles	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	12	5
(c) Other	..	..	..	..	..	..	52	15	34
(11) Breaches of city or borough by-laws—									
(a) Cycle	..	..	..	..	..	..	69	46	16
(b) Other than cycling	..	..	..	..	..	..	10	8	14
							2,493	2,012	1,786
							3,076	2,529	2,240

TABLE 3.—COMPARATIVE STATEMENT SHOWING THE ACTION TAKEN IN RESPECT OF CHILDREN WHO APPEARED BEFORE CHILDREN'S COURTS

	1943-44.	1944-45.	1945-46.
Committed to the care of the Superintendent	586	540	446
Placed under supervision	993	812	755
Supervision extended	34	28	53
Supervision with residence	16	15	16
Admonished and discharged	677	547	428
Admonished, discharged, and ordered to make restitution	242	183	170
Admonished and ordered to pay costs	13	4	..
Admonished and fined	20	26	29
Adjournd	86	78	93
Adjournd <i>sine die</i>	33	36	18
Dismissed	71	28	38
Committed to Borstal	42	32	21
Convicted and fined	5	6	4
Convicted and discharged	4	2	1
Convicted and ordered to come up for sentence	..	..	1
Returned to the care of the Superintendent	83	64	64
Withdrawn	12	13	11
Ordered to come up for sentence	3	4	2
Probation	21	15	11
Referred to Magistrate's Court	2	1	..
Fined	58	42	42
License cancelled	..	..	2
Restitution order cancelled	2	1	2
Committed to Supreme Court for sentence	1	1	1
Committed to prison	..	1	1
Committed to mental hospital	..	..	1
By-law cases—			
Admonished and discharged	34	25	19
Admonished and ordered to pay costs	..	..	1
Ordered to pay costs or fined and ordered to pay costs	38	25	5
Fined	..	..	4
Dismissed	..	..	1
	3,076	2,529	2,240

TABLE 4.—CHILDREN PLACED UNDER SUPERVISION OF CHILD WELFARE OFFICERS BY COURTS DURING YEARS ENDED 31ST MARCH, 1945 AND 1946

(Classified according to reasons for appearance)

	Boys.		Girls.		Totals.	
	1944-45.	1945-46.	1944-45.	1945-46.	1944-45.	1945-46.
Charged with an offence	576	515	57	63	633	578
Delinquent	118	141	26	16	144	157
Not under proper control	39	26	31	16	70	42
In detrimental environment	3	5	2	12	5	17
Indigent	3	6	1	2	4	8
Neglected	2	3	3	4	5	7
	741	696	120	113	861	809

NOTE.—Of the totals for 1945-46, 58 (53 boys and 5 girls) were again before the Court during their period of supervision and the period was extended, 43 (29 boys and 14 girls) were again before the Court during their period of supervision and were committed to the care of the State, 21 (14 boys and 7 girls) were ordered to spend a period in an institution, 70 (66 boys and 4 girls) previously had been on supervision which had expired, 1 boy had been committed previously, 2 boys had been on remand previously, 28 (13 boys and 15 girls) previously had been held on warrant, 7 (6 boys and 1 girl) previously had been temporary inmates or *section 12* cases, and 13 (8 boys and 5 girls) subsequently were temporary inmates or were held on warrant.

TABLE 5.—CAUSES OF COMMITAL AND ADMISSION, 1945-46

	Boys.		Girls.		Totals.	
	1944-45.	1945-46.	1944-45.	1945-46.	1944-45.	1945-46.
Indigent	74	85	74	58	148	143
Not under proper control	68	53	82	54	150	107
Delinquent	34	35	19	12	53	47
Charged with an offence	91	67	10	13	101	80
Living in a detrimental environment	12	14	18	25	30	39
Neglected	27	20	33	14	60	34
Breach of supervision order	1	1	2	1	3	2
Supervision with residence	9	14	7	7	16	21
	316	289	245	184	561	473
Admitted under section 12, Child Welfare Act, 1925	10	20	4	19	14	39
Admitted on warrant	26	19	23	27	49	46
Admitted under section 127 of the Education Act	49	38	30	23	79	61
	85	77	57	69	142	146
	401	366	302	253	703	619

NOTE.—Of the total for 1945-46, 142, or 22.94 per cent. were illegitimate. In addition, there were 11 (8 boys and 3 girls) temporarily admitted to child welfare institutions, as against 22 (14 boys and 8 girls) for the preceding year.

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