

CHILD WELFARE INSTITUTIONS

Although it is preferred that, where possible, children be placed in private homes, admissions to the Department's institutions have been maintained at a high level and have fully taxed the accommodation available. Great difficulty is being experienced in finding sufficient foster-homes, and there appears to be an increasing demand for admissions to institutions of cases requiring special treatment which the foster-home cannot be expected to provide. It is apparent that consideration will need to be given to a further extension of institution facilities generally. At the 31st March there were 306 children in residence in child welfare institutions, including receiving homes, boys' homes, hostels, and the training centres for older children.

Boys' Homes and Receiving Homes.—There are now 11 of these homes in the main centres of population and they continue to serve a very useful purpose as clearing houses for their districts by providing temporary accommodation for children pending their placement in or transfer to foster-homes or institutions. While in the home, children are given medical and, where necessary, psychological examination and treatment before placement. Only in special cases where a need for extended training is indicated are children kept in these homes for a lengthy period.

A new receiving home was opened in Palmerston North during the year. It will serve the needs particularly of the New Plymouth, Wanganui, and Palmerston North districts.

Hostels.—The Girls' Hostel in Wellington, which provides accommodation for girls in the city in offices, factories, &c., had 12 girls in residence at the 31st March; 26 were admitted during the year and 28 left. The hostel also serves a useful purpose in providing temporary accommodation for girls passing through Wellington, and during the year 49 were assisted in this way. The Matron's report states that the health of the girls has been excellent and the good tone of the institution has been maintained. Employers of the girls report favourably upon their work and conduct. Six girls attended dressmaking classes at the Wellington Technical School. The usual full programme of recreational activities has been carried out and a keen interest has been displayed in play-reading and handcraft.

The Boys' Hostel in Auckland had 14 boys in residence at the 31st March. Building extensions to provide additional accommodation and improved facilities are now being undertaken.

Boys' Training Centre, Levin.—The accommodation at both the senior section for older boys, and the junior section for boys of primary-school age at the Hokio Training School was fully occupied throughout the year. During the twelve months ended 31st March, 1947, 52 boys were admitted and 49 were placed out. Of the latter, 45 boys were either placed in employment or returned to relatives or friends, 2 were transferred to boys' homes pending similar placement, and 2 were transferred to a Borstal institution. At the 31st March, 1947, there were 60 in residence. Of these, 17 were in the Hokio Section. The scheme of training includes farming in its various branches, gardening, poultrywork, woodwork, and a certain amount of instruction in mechanics. Adequate provision is made for schooling, and a well-planned programme of leisure-time occupations, including cultural and recreational activities, is directed towards the social readjustment of the individual boy.

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

There are now growing signs in the district of a more understanding attitude and increasing friendliness towards the Training Centre. People find our lads represented in every church congregation; they are at socials and dances. On the sports-grounds and at the picture-theatre the Centre is represented, and the public are becoming aware that these boys set a high standard of conduct. Then, too, the Centre is steadily building up a reputation for the quality and quantity of the community services it initiates and undertakes. Notable amongst these may be mentioned the cleaning of the Agricultural and Pastoral Association grounds of stones—six weeks of leisure-time activities—which permitted the sowing of the area in grass. The boys made and provided the Levin Play Centres and Creche with all its toys and, indeed, some of its furniture. Sports bodies have reason to appreciate the many hours of work spent by the boys in preparing the grounds for sports