

The figures for the previous eleven years are as follows: 406, 516, 518, 604, 605, 685, 854, 1,065, 1,151, 1,383, and 1,285.

Most of the applications for adoption are received from (a) couples who have no children of their own, (b) parents who wish to have a companion for their only child, and (c) mothers of illegitimate children who wish to adopt their own children upon subsequent marriage.

Children may be legally adopted up to the age of twenty-one years, but the great majority of those adopted were in the group from infants up to five years of age. Although there is provision in the Act for premiums to pass at adoption, this rarely takes place. There were only four such cases last year. Applications to adopt infant girls usually predominate, but the orders actually made reflect the number and sex of the children available. Last year the normal position was reversed in that the number of boys adopted exceeded the number of girls. The figures were 647 boys and 607 girls. Of the 1,254 children adopted, 923 (479 boys and 444 girls) were illegitimate. Three adoption orders made earlier were cancelled during the year.

CHILDREN'S COURTS

Over recent years there has been increased interest in the information available about children appearing before the Children's Courts. With the proposed establishment of the School of Social Work at Victoria University College and the possible establishment of a research agency, this increased demand for factual information may be expected to be sustained and extended. In order to meet it, some changes are being made in the methods of obtaining and tabulating information. These changes inevitably will cause some difficulty in effecting comparisons between figures previously published and those to be published in future. The differences, however, will not be so great as to make comparisons impossible, and, moreover, the long-range advantages of the changes outweigh the temporary disadvantage.

The nature and extent of the changes are explained in an Appendix to this report. The figures for the year under review are set out in the old form in the tables immediately following the report and in the new form in the Appendix which follows those tables.

It is hoped to publish in subsequent reports additional information on a variety of matters concerning juvenile delinquency—*e.g.*, the age, sex, and racial groupings of juvenile offenders, and the incidence of recidivism among different groups of offenders.

Comments on the figures for Court appearances are as follows:—

(1) *Total Appearances*.—Table 2 shows that the figure for all children appearing before the Children's Court, either on complaints under the Child Welfare Act or charged with offences, is 149 lower than that for last year. Since 1943–44, which was the peak year for Children's Court appearances, there has been a general decline in total appearances. The figure for the peak year was 3,076; for the past year it was 1,883. This represents a decrease of 38·8 per cent. Such a decrease in itself is most satisfactory but it appears even more gratifying when the figures for the past twelve years are studied. This range of years has been chosen with a view to covering pre-war, war, and post-war years and so affording a fair comparison of the general position. They show that the figure for the peak year was not very much higher than those for the preceding years and that the downward trend since has been a fairly steep one. This would counter any tendency to regard the choice of the highest and lowest figures for purposes of comparison as too arbitrary and as leading to a more favourable conclusion than a survey of a number of typical and representative years would warrant. The figures are: 1938, 2,982; 1939, 2,801; 1940, 2,953; 1941, 2,934; 1942, 2,936; 1943, 3,071; 1944, 3,076; 1945, 2,529; 1946, 2,240; 1947, 2,026; 1948, 2,032; 1949, 1,883.