

have committed petty offences against the law and are in need of home training and discipline for short periods prior to placing out under suitable conditions, generally with relatives or friends. As a general rule young boys who have been guilty of more serious offences, or who have already been given a chance under the supervision of the Probation Officer and have failed to make good, are admitted to the special section for schoolboys at the Boys' Training-farm, Weraroa. The percentage of failures under the probation system is very small indeed (less than 3 per cent.). The number of cases dealt with by the Probation Officers is as follows: Auckland, 401; Wellington, 127; Christchurch, 196; Dunedin, 94; total, 818.

Children boarded out.

The number of children boarded out in foster-homes at the end of the year was 1,696, showing an increase of 425 when compared with the numbers for the previous year. The system of supervising all these children has been considerably revised during the year, making provision for more frequent visits at shorter intervals to the foster-homes. On account of the general shortage of housing-accommodation throughout New Zealand, considerable difficulty has been experienced in finding foster-homes, especially in the principal cities, but it may be stated that there is no dearth of suitable people in the country districts who are anxious to to provide and care for these unfortunate children.

On account of the increased cost of living the boarding-out rate has been raised from 15s. to 17s. 6d. per week for infants under twelve months, and from 12s. 6d. to 15s. for children over that age and up to fifteen years, or longer if the child in question is still attending school. In addition, a very complete initial outfit of clothing is supplied with each child, and the Department provides free medical and dental treatment and medicines. School books and stationery are also provided for children attending school.

Epidemic Orphans.

In accordance with the policy approved by the Government, the Education Department has taken charge of all children who lost both parents as a result of the influenza epidemic. In the absence of legislation for this purpose, the machinery of the Industrials Schools Act has had to be utilized for the purpose of vesting the legal guardianship of these children in the Department, and for the purpose of enabling the Department to maintain the children out of moneys appropriated under the provisions of that Act. In actual practice, however, the majority of the Court orders were issued without requiring the actual attendance of the children concerned at the Court, and in no case were such children sent to an institution other than a receiving-home for destitute and neglected children. Admissions of such children even to receiving-homes were regarded as temporary expedients only for the purpose of giving necessary medical or dental treatment and to enable them to be supplied with outfits of clothing.

All these children have now been placed either with relatives or in suitable foster-homes. In the interests of each child, however, the Department's system of supervision will obtain. Experienced lady officers visit the children at regular intervals and ensure that they are being kindly treated and that their education is not being neglected. In connection with the placing of epidemic orphans, it is gratifying to note that through the numerous applications received from generous-hearted people all over New Zealand it has been possible to place all the children in good homes—many of them superior in standard to the homes provided by the parents when alive.

Boys' Schools.

With the extension of the probation and boarding-out system it has been possible to close the institution known as the Boys' Training Farm, Nelson, for the maintenance and education of boys of school age who for various reasons were committed to the care of the State. The Training-farm was actually closed on the 31st March, and immediately converted into a special school for mentally backward boys.

The boys' Training-farm at Weraroa now caters for boys of all ages who through the commission of offences against the law are not considered fit to associate with the children attending an ordinary public school, at least not until they have undergone a course of training and discipline at Weraroa. The Training-