

mother, where possible, to re-establish herself in the community); (8) carrying out preventive work—that is, the investigation and necessary social readjustment in the early stages of any cases brought under notice. The aim of this Branch is to check dependency and delinquency by studying the causes, and by effectively remedying them where possible.

Briefly, the functions of the Child Welfare Branch are to prevent wastage in child-life, to provide for social readjustment wherever necessary in the interests of children, and to ensure that the physically and mentally handicapped are educated, trained, and, where possible, suitably placed in industry.

CHILDREN'S COURTS.

Under the provisions of the Child Welfare Act, Children's Courts have been established throughout the Dominion, and special Magistrates appointed to preside over these Courts. Experience in the working of the Courts has shown the need for slight amendments of the original provisions in the direction of clarifying the position as to the Courts' powers in dealing with children charged with indictable offences, and of providing a simplified system for dealing with petty offences.

Associates of the Children's Courts.—The Act provides that the personnel of the Court may include Honorary Associates, of either sex, whose function it is to act as the children's friend and generally to advise the presiding Magistrate after each case has been considered. So far, Associates of both sexes have been appointed only in the four large centres, and have proved of very material assistance not only to the Courts but to the Department's Child Welfare Officers, who are at liberty to refer to the Associates for advice and assistance in any cases of difficulty. Assistance is also frequently given afterwards in cases that have been dealt with by the Courts.

Child Welfare Officers.—The Act also provides for the appointment of Child Welfare Officers, whose duty it is to investigate each case from a social-welfare standpoint and to furnish the Court with particulars as to family history, conduct, progress at school, degree of mentality, &c. As a rule, at least in the centres, the Child Welfare Officers are identical with the regular field officers of the Branch, but in outlying towns and country districts the services of the local voluntary social workers have been utilized to very great advantage. By this means the Department is endeavouring to enlist the services of local organizations, with the object of dealing with the various classes of children in their own districts, and in their own homes where possible, by private effort directed from the nearest child-welfare centre.

The total number of children under the supervision of the Child Welfare Branch at the 31st March, 1927, was 5,592, classed under the following headings:—

Boarded out, at service, in receiving-homes, &c.	..	..	..	3,908
Under supervision	..	..	..	412
Infant-life protection	..	..	..	878
Deaf children	..	..	..	121
Feeble-minded children	..	..	..	273
Total	..	..	..	5,592

The number of children committed to the care of the Superintendent during the year ended 31st March, 1927, was 540, classified according to reason for committal as follows: Destitution, 238; delinquency, 7; detrimental environments, 77; not under proper control, 163; accused or guilty of punishable offence, 55; and in addition 45 were admitted by private arrangement (section 12, Child Welfare Act), 17 were temporarily admitted, and 1 under section 47 of the Infants Act, making a total of 603.

Classified according to age at the time of admission the numbers are as follows: Under six months, 52; over six months and under one year, 33; from one to five years, 141; from five to ten years, 131; from ten to fourteen years, 143; and over fourteen years, 103.