

SCHOOLS FOR THE FEEBLE-MINDED.
Numbers at 31st March, 1927.

					Richmond. (Girls.)	Otekaike. (Boys.)	Total.
In residence	..	..	..	..	71	190	261
On vacation	..	..	..	..	4	1	5
At service	..	..	..	..	..	2	2
In hospital	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
In probation homes	..	..	..	..	..	5	5
Missing	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Totals	..	..	..	..	75	198	273

Particulars of Expenditure for the Year 1926-27.

Item.					Otekaike.			Richmond.			Total.		
					£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Salaries	..	..	..	..	5,441	17	3	1,790	7	7	7,232	4	10
Advertising	..	..	..	..	15	15	11	4	18	6	20	14	5
Maintenance of buildings	..	..	..	..	251	17	7	233	0	5	484	18	0
Maintenance of institutions	..	..	..	..	4,575	1	3	1,483	2	4	6,058	3	7
Contingencies	..	..	..	..	2	2	0	..	..	..	2	2	0
					10,286	14	0	3,511	8	10	13,798	2	10
Travelling-expenses	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	4,888	12	3
											14,286	15	1
Less recoveries	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	2,962	18	11
Net cost to Department	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	11,323	16	2

The net expenditure for the year 1925-26 was £11,745 9s ; the recoveries for the year compared with the previous year show an increase of £569 10s. 4d.

PREVENTIVE WORK AND CO-OPERATION WITH PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS.

In its work of prevention and social readjustment the Child Welfare Branch endeavours to co-operate with all private organizations engaged in social service in the interests of children. Experience indicates that there is great need for co-ordination of all social-service efforts : not only would it be more economical from the taxpayers' point of view, for it would prevent much overlapping, but co-ordination would result in the adoption of definite uniform standards in social-welfare work. The mere fact of bringing together the various officers of Government and voluntary systems for the purpose of discussing one another's problems would have a beneficial effect.

So far as the Department can ascertain there are approximately eighty-five private institutions for children throughout the Dominion, and the number maintained therein about four thousand. The number of institutions for children in proportion to the population is very large in New Zealand, and from information obtained by the Department it appears that fully 87 per cent. of the children in these institutions have either one or both parents living. The cause of so many children whose parents are living being admitted to institutions may be due to—(1) Adverse economic conditions ; (2) difficulty in providing housing accommodation ; (3) domestic differences ; or (4) a tendency on the part of parents to delegate their natural responsibilities and to take the easiest course offering.

In deciding on admissions to any kind of institution whatsoever it is essential that parents who are physically able to do so should not be relieved, except perhaps temporarily, of the responsibility of maintaining and caring for their children. The moral effect on some of the parents at least who are relieved without very good cause must be bad, and is bound indirectly to reflect itself upon the community generally. On the other hand, it is considered that home life is the most precious heritage of every child, and no effort should be spared to keep the home together. It is generally recognized that the institution, however well conducted, cannot take the place of the natural home, however humble.

While the number of institutions for children in New Zealand is perhaps a somewhat striking commentary on the lack of a realization of parental responsibility, yet this great movement is indicative of the tremendous efforts that have been made in recent years in social-service work by every recognized religious denomination in the Dominion. Those who come in contact with these private organizations cannot but be impressed by the spirit and remarkable interest of the workers in all these institutions, and the Government recognized that it would be a mistake to take any action that might tend to discourage private effort in the matter of providing for children to whom the natural protection and wise guidance of parents have been denied.