

Generally speaking, the private institutions of the Dominion have many things in common, but practically all of them retain their individuality and are working out their problems in different ways. It is at this stage in the development of these institutions that it is considered that there should be closer relationship with the Child Welfare Branch of the Education Department, which deals with all types of children under a Dominion-wide scheme.

In dealing with children the policy of the Child Welfare Branch is to place them, wherever possible, in suitable family homes, and to reserve the institution for the child who requires intensive training, or for various reasons is not fit to associate with ordinary children at a public school.

The private organization has not yet arrived at the stage when the need for preventive work, child-placing, and vocational guidance has been fully realized. Both systems, however, represent adjacent zones of social service whose boundaries are undefined and whose tasks intermingle. It is not proposed that there should be any line of demarcation between child-helping work that should be carried out by the State and that which should be administered by private effort. While the State's activities must perforce be confined within certain limits, yet on the other hand the private agency is in the position to enter undeveloped and experimental fields of activity in the interests of the children. For such work the advice and guidance of the experienced social workers employed by the State should be available.

STREET TRADING.

The Act of 1925 provides that regulations may be issued for the supervision of street trading and attendance of children at places of public amusement. These, I am sorry to say, have not yet been issued, due mainly to the fact that the time of the field staff of the Child Welfare Branch is fully taken up with the additional work in carrying out the other provisions of the Act. In the meantime, however, additional information on this subject has been obtained from the Australian States where regulations are already in force.

CHILDREN'S COURTS.

A certain amount of confusion has arisen in dealing with children charged with indictable offences. The Child Welfare Act, 1925, gives Magistrates very wide discretionary powers in dealing with all children, but in some cases Magistrates have elected not to deal finally with certain types of charges. The intention of the Act was to provide a simplified and quick method of dealing with children, no matter what the charge, in a manner quite different from the system adopted in the Courts set up for the trial of adult offenders. In other countries it is now recognized that a child offender should not be treated as a criminal, but should be regarded, as a general rule, as a victim of his environment. It follows, therefore, that the State should protect him and provide safeguards for his well-being. If the spirit of the Act is to be carried out it is essential that in the procedure to be followed in the Children's Court every care should be taken to protect the child from undue publicity and to eliminate part at least of the practice followed in other Courts, of having the charge read, of requiring the accused to plead, of asking if willing to have the charge dealt with summarily, of taking evidence on oath, and of registering a conviction, &c. Some of the Courts have dispensed with the most of these formalities, but in others the criminal procedure is still followed.

In the matter of publicity the views of Magistrates differ. In the Act it is laid down that no proceedings are to be published without the consent of the Magistrate. Some consider that nothing should be published regarding children's cases, and with this view the Department agrees. In the case of an adult the publication of proceedings, particularly the punishment administered, probably does act as a deterrent, but in the case of children it is the Department's experience that publicity serves no good purpose and in many cases may be harmful. The following extract is interesting, for it represents the views of one of the senior Magistrates in the South Island :—

"*Publicity.*—Should reporters be allowed to be present in the Court? Reporters have not been allowed in the Children's Court here, nor has there been any request for their admission. My view, which is completely endorsed by my associates, is that the presence of reporters is objectionable, and in many cases calculated to be embarrassing and foreign to the informal atmosphere which should obtain in a Children's Court. Only the immediate parties should be present at the hearing of any charge. We are also opposed to publication of reports, which we consider serves no good purpose and is in many cases distinctly mischievous, particularly in view of the raciness of modern reporting. If there is any real public demand for a knowledge of what is done this could be supplied by a colourless report by the Clerk, merely stating the charge and result without any details of evidence. One argument in favour of publicity is that otherwise you create a Star Chamber. As regards this I desire to emphasize that the Children's Court is a special tribunal with a special procedure, and that there is no analogy between a Children's Court and an ordinary Criminal Court. The real function of the Court is not to decide whether a particular offence has been committed, but to consider the welfare of the child in view of all the surrounding circumstances. The Court may commit or otherwise deal with the child without hearing the charge, or even if the charge is not proved. The constitution of the Court should be a sufficient safeguard."

Another practice that has caused a good deal of comment is the fact that in some of the Children's Courts the police attend in uniform and really conduct the prosecution, as in the adult Courts. It is difficult to understand why it is necessary for the police to attend in any guise, except perhaps as witnesses in the few cases where the child does not admit the offence. In other countries the duty of the police ends when the case is reported to the Welfare Officer, who then makes the necessary investigation not only in relation to the particular charge but also in regard to the child's conduct, family history, environment, mentality, and any other relevant matters that will assist the Court in dealing with the child. There seems to be no reason why a similar system should not be adopted in