

So far as their scholastic education is concerned, the interest of the Child Welfare Branch in them is really similar to that of any guardian. They attend the public school and take part in the ordinary everyday activities of the community as does the child brought up by his own parents. The remaining 5 per cent. represents those who on account of anti-social habits or subnormality are not fit to be placed in foster-homes or allowed to attend the public school. For this small residue institutions are provided, with facilities for the training and education of the inmates along specialized lines suited as far as practicable to the peculiar needs of the individual cases.

At the end of the year there were 4,014 children under control (excluding those mentioned under separate headings below), and of these 266 were in residence at Government receiving-homes and probation homes (many of these, of course, only temporarily), training-farms, and training institutions, and 67 in the four private schools recognized under the Child Welfare Act; 1,981 children were boarded out in foster-homes, 902 were in situations, and 631 residing under license with relatives and friends. The remainder were in various private institutions.

Of the boarded-out children, 130 were over the age of fourteen years, of whom 78 are still attending primary schools, and 52 are receiving higher education (35 technical and 17 secondary).

The children over school age in employment number 758 males and 394 females (included in the total of 4,014). Of the males, 570 are farm-workers (201 skilled in dairy-work and cheesemaking, and 369 competent to milk and carry out general farm-work), 56 are apprentices (of which number some are receiving assistance), and 132 others are employed in various trades. Of the girls, there are 317 domestic workers, 42 factory employees, and 35 engaged in various employments, such as shop-assistants, nurses, dressmakers, &c.

SYSTEM OF SUPERVISION.

The number of cases dealt with by the Courts last year was 1,685, and of these 448 were placed under the supervision of Child Welfare Officers or brought under the "Big Brother" scheme as carried out by the Y.M.C.A. and the Roman Catholic authorities. The number actually admitted to institutions such as receiving-homes, special schools, training-farm, &c., was 592, but all these, with the exception of 117 who require long periods of training or were regarded as unfit for placing out, were suitably provided for in the community before the close of the year. The remainder of the children were dealt with in a summary manner not calling for supervision by a Child Welfare Officer.

INFANT-LIFE PROTECTION AND ADOPTION OF CHILDREN (INFANTS ACT, 1908).

At the end of the year there were 902 children being maintained in 753 licensed foster-homes. Of these, 638 homes had one child each, 89 had two children each, 20 had three children each, 5 had four children each, and 1 home had six children. The payments by relatives for the maintenance of each child ranged from 5s. to £1 10s. a week, the average rate of payment being approximately 15s. 7d. per week.

Adoptions.—During the year 372 children were adopted, and in 40 of these cases premiums were received by the Department's agents and paid out at the rate of 15s. a week for each child concerned. Of the total number of children adopted, 83 were under the age of six months, 39 between the age of six and twelve months, and 250 between the age of one and six years.

CARE AND TRAINING OF DEAF CHILDREN, CHILDREN WITH DEFECTIVE SPEECH, BLIND CHILDREN, AND MENTALLY-BACKWARD CHILDREN.

The pupils under instruction at the School for the Deaf, Sumner, during the year numbered 122, and of these 14 were day pupils and 108 boarders.

The special day classes in Auckland and Wellington for partially deaf children and for children with speech-defects were continued with highly successful results. About 120 children attended the classes last year. Provision has also been made in these centres and in Christchurch for night classes for the instruction of the adult deaf, 78 persons afflicted in this manner attending the classes for the year ended 31st March, 1928.