

- (9) The care and training and subsequent supervision in the community of the higher grades of feeble-minded children who cannot be left in their own homes, or who cannot attend special day classes attached to public schools.
- (10) The education of deaf children and those who are partially deaf and children with speech-defects.
- (11) The inspection and registration of all children's homes, orphanages, &c.

A most important function of the Child Welfare Branch is to endeavour to check in the early stages the development of conditions in the social field that lead or are likely to lead to child wastage and, where this is not possible, to provide social readjustment for the child or young person who by reason of his environment or physical or mental condition is handicapped in the race of life and likely to become a burden on the community.

The Child Welfare Amendment Act of last session contains important provisions regarding the inspection and registration of private institutions, orphanages, &c., where children are maintained apart from their parents or guardians. Generally speaking, these private institutions for children, of which there are about eighty throughout the Dominion, have many things in common, but practically all of them retain their individuality and are working out their problems (similar problems mostly) in different ways. At this stage in the development of child welfare in the Dominion it is considered desirable in the interest of all concerned, particularly the children, that there should be a close relationship between private social-welfare organizations and institutions and the Child Welfare Branch of the Education Department.

The Amending Act considerably clarifies the powers and scope of the Children's Courts, and specially provides methods of dealing with children and young persons without the recording of convictions. Parental responsibility in the matter of ensuring that the conditions imposed on children residing in their own homes, but placed under the supervision of Child Welfare Officers by the Children's Courts, is also provided for.

CHILDREN'S COURTS.

It is pleasing to record that Magistrates and Justices specially appointed to exercise jurisdiction in Children's Courts have endeavoured to carry out the spirit of the legislation under which these Courts have been established. The view generally accepted by child-welfare authorities in regard to the offending child is that less is to be achieved by punishment than by correction of conditions, care and protection, and the prevention of a recurrence of inimical conditions through the constructive work of the Court in conjunction with the Welfare Officers. As stated in a previous report, the child should be saved to the State, not punished by it.

A certain amount of controversy has been raised in regard to the practice of permitting the publication of proceedings regarding children's cases. The Child Welfare Act stipulates that in no case shall the name of the child be published, or any particulars likely to lead to the identification of the child. Most Magistrates take the view that the presence of reporters is embarrassing and foreign to the informal atmosphere that should obtain in a Children's Court, and that the publication of reports, far from serving any good purpose, may prove distinctly mischievous and harmful.

Associates of Children's Courts.—The personnel of the Children's Court may include Honorary Associates, of either sex, whose function it is to act as the children's friend and generally to assist the presiding Magistrate or Justice in arriving at his decision. So far, Associates of both sexes have been appointed only in the four large centres and in some of the smaller centres, and have proved of very material assistance not only to the Courts but to the officers of the Child Welfare Branch. The Department wishes to acknowledge gratefully the assistance that is frequently given by the Associates after the cases have been dealt with by the Courts.

Child Welfare Officers.—One of the duties of these officers is to investigate each case from a social-welfare standpoint and to furnish the Court with particulars as to family history, environment, conduct, progress at school, degree of mentality, &c. As a rule, in the larger centres the Child Welfare Officers are identical with the regular field officers of the Child Welfare Branch, but in the outlying towns and country districts the services of local voluntary social workers have been utilized