

Investigation and Supervision of Cases appearing before the Children's Court.

It is provided in the Child Welfare Act that in every case where a child appears before the Children's Court investigation must be made by a Child Welfare Officer before the case can be dealt with by the Court. There is provision also for the Court to place children under the supervision of these field officers for definite periods where it is considered that the child or young person concerned can be safely left in his own home or in a home of some relative or friend approved by the Court.

From the tables published below it will be seen that during last year 448 children were so dealt with, but twenty-six of these eventually proved unsuitable and had to be removed from their homes and placed under direct State control.

A review of the boys placed by the Children's Court in Auckland under the supervision of Child Welfare Officers for a period of eighteen months from the 1st April, 1925 (the date on which the Child Welfare Act came into force) is interesting, for it reveals not only the number of cases appearing a second time before the Court, but also the number of cases where the boys had to be removed from their homes and placed under the guardianship of the Child Welfare Branch. The following are the figures:—

Total number of cases dealt with	415
Number who have appeared in Court a second time	34
Number (out of 34) committed to care of Child Welfare Branch	14
Number of repeaters still under supervision in their own homes	20
Percentage of repeaters on total number dealt with	8.19
Percentage of repeaters necessary to remove from their homes (and committed to care of Child Welfare Branch) of total number dealt with	3.37

All the boys (415) were supervised under the "big brother" scheme. As the figures indicate, the majority were suitably dealt with in their own homes without the need for further intervention by the State. The results obtained in other parts of the Dominion are equally satisfactory.

From both social and financial points of view it is impossible to estimate the benefits of such work. In the absence of the right kind of supervision and adjustment the majority of these lads would undoubtedly have drifted into anti-social ways and finally have come again into conflict with the law for more serious offences. In many cases these "little brothers" have developed into promising youths some of whom are now leaders of certain of the Boys' Divisions in the Y.M.C.A.

The total number of cases investigated by Child Welfare Officers in the main centres during the year ended 31st March, 1928, and the manner in which the children were dealt with, are set forth in the following table:—

TABLE 1.

District.	Committed care of Superintendent.	Placed under Supervision of Child Welfare Officer.	Admonished and discharged.	Withdrawn.	Returned to Institution.	Dismissed.	Adjourned.	Committed to Mental Hospital.	Adjourned, <i>sine die</i> .	Convicted and ordered to come up for Sentence.	Ordered to be returned to Australia.	Convicted and placed on Probation.	Committed to Borstal.	Convicted and birched.	Convicted and fined.	Committed to Supreme Court for Sentence.	By-law Cases.					Total—all Cases.
																	Withdrawn.	Dismissed.	Convicted and fined.	Admonished and discharged.	Convicted with Costs.	
North Auckland ..	20	17	28	..	..	1	1	..	6	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	2	..	76	
Auckland ..	116	85	82	..	3	9	..	..	..	1	1	4	4	..	..	..	..	1	1	16	1	324
South Auckland ..	49	32	29	..	..	2	6	..	..	2	..	..	..	1	..	..	..	..	1	..	122	
Wanganui and Taranaki ..	28	27	15	..	..	1	4	..	1	1	..	4	3	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	84	
Hawke's Bay and Gisborne ..	33	32	11	..	5	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	5	2	..	1	..	..	2	1	93	
Palmerston North ..	28	19	28	..	3	..	4	1	..	..	..	..	1	..	..	2	..	..	..	..	86	
Wellington ..	96	82	41	3	5	9	2	..	..	..	..	..	4	..	2	..	1	3	1	2	7	258
Nelson and Blenheim ..	19	6	..	..	1	4	2	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	32	
West Coast (S.I.) ..	6	..	23	..	..	5	..	..	..	1	..	..	1	..	..	3	..	..	1	1	41	
North Canterbury ..	70	48	53	..	3	2	1	..	1	..	..	6	3	..	1	1	..	64	18	..	272	
South Canterbury ..	44	17	12	2	..	6	13	..	5	1	..	..	3	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	103	
Otago ..	61	64	16	..	..	1	..	..	2	..	..	1	2	..	..	..	1	..	3	..	151	
Southland ..	22	19	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	43	
Totals ..	592	448	338	5	20	40	33	1	15	8	1	16	26	3	3	7	2	5	66	46	10	1,685

CHILD-LABOUR.

From time to time cases are brought under the notice of the Department where it is alleged that children are required to work unduly long hours before and after school, particularly on dairy farms. Where the children are assisting the parents who may be struggling farmers it would be a difficult matter to enforce any legislation dealing with this phase of child welfare.

The case of the child who is engaged in street trading calls for proper supervision and regulation. From time to time surveys of the position have been made in certain of the main centres of population. One of the reports reveals the fact that no less than 355 boys attending the city and suburban schools in one of the four centres of population were employed before and after school in work, such as selling newspapers or delivering milk, that necessitated their being on the streets, and that some of them were required to rise very early in the morning, while others again were on the streets until a late hour at night. Another report of a survey made of twenty-three boys of school-age found selling newspapers