

CHILD WELFARE.

NUMBER OF CHILDREN UNDER SUPERVISION.

The total number of children under the supervision of the Child Welfare Branch as at the 31st March, 1929, was 6,364, classed under the following headings :—

State wards boarded out, at service, in receiving-homes, &c.	..	..	4,287
State wards under supervision of Child Welfare Officers	..	..	678
Infants in registered foster-homes under Infants Act	..	..	1,007
Pupils at School for Deaf, Sumner	..	..	117
Feeble-minded persons in institutions	..	..	275
Total	..	..	6,364

The number of children committed to the care of the Superintendent during the year ended 31st March, 1929, was 650, classified according to reason for committal as follows : Indigent, 264 ; delinquent, 19 ; detrimental environments, 99 ; not under proper control, 157 ; accused or guilty of punishable offence, 84 ; neglected, 27 ; and in addition 13 were admitted by private arrangement (section 12, Child Welfare Act), while 37 were temporarily admitted, and 2 under section 47 of the Infants Act, making a total of 702.

Classified according to age at the time of admission the numbers are as follow : Under six months, 69 ; over six months and under one year, 43 ; from one to five years, 135 ; from five to ten years, 159 ; from ten to fourteen years, 143 ; and over fourteen years, 153 : total, 702.

NUMBERS UNDER THE GUARDIANSHIP OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF THE CHILD WELFARE BRANCH.

Fully 96 per cent. of the children under fifteen years of age under the guardianship of the Child Welfare Branch are placed in foster-homes, mostly in country districts, where they have the opportunity of becoming members of some family and of being gradually absorbed into the community. The general welfare of the children is safeguarded by careful selection of foster-homes and by frequent visits by Child Welfare Officers.

The children attend the public schools and have similar opportunities of taking part in the ordinary everyday activities of the community as the child who is brought up by his own parents. The remaining 4 per cent. represent 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 4,287 children under control (excluding those mentioned under separate headings below), and of these 287 were in residence at Government receiving-homes and probation homes (many of these, of course, only temporarily), training-farms, and training institutions, and 74 in the four private Roman Catholic schools recognized under the Child Welfare Act ; 2,122 children were boarded out in foster-homes, 953 were in situations, and 653 residing under license with relatives and friends. The remainder were in various private institutions.

Of the boarded out children, 162 are over the age of fourteen years, of whom 94 are still attending primary schools, and 68 are receiving higher education (34 technical and 34 secondary).

The children over school age in employment number 764 males and 440 females (a number of whom are residing with friends), included in the total of 4,287. Of the males, 582 are farm-workers (219 skilled in dairy-work and cheesemaking, and 363 competent to milk and carry out general farm-work), 54 are apprentices (of which number some are receiving assistance), and 128 others are employed in various trades. A number of these are also receiving assistance. Of the girls, there are 339 domestic workers, 60 factory employees, and 41 engaged in various employments, such as shop-assistants, nurses, dressmakers, &c.