

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.

SYSTEM OF SUPERVISION.

The number of cases dealt with by the Children's Courts last year was 2,023, and of these 533 were placed under the supervision of the 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 650, but all these, with the exception of 130 who require further training, were suitably provided for in the community before the close of the year. The remainder of the children appearing before the Courts were dealt with in a summary manner not calling for supervision by a Child Welfare Officer.

INSTITUTIONAL CARE.

For the training and detention of State wards who have proved by their anti-social behaviour somewhat of a problem to manage, either in their own homes or in foster-homes or places of employment, and for those higher-grade improvable feeble-minded cases who cannot be suitably adjusted in the community, provision is made in institutions established for the purpose.

The raising of the age of a "child" from sixteen to seventeen years (Child Welfare Amendment Act, 1927) has materially increased the number of young persons (particularly girls) appearing before the Children's Courts, and in consequence further institutional provision has been necessary for such of these cases requiring training and treatment and the staff of Child Welfare Officers has had to be increased.