

INFANT-LIFE PROTECTION (INFANTS ACT, 1908).

Infants' Homes.—Under the provisions of Part V of the Infants Act, it is unlawful for any person to receive or retain in his care or charge any infant or any child under the age of six years for the purpose of maintaining it apart from its parents or guardians for a longer period than seven consecutive days, unless such person is licensed in accordance with this part of the Act. The duties in connection with the licensing and inspection of these homes, and the supervision of the children in such homes, are carried out by the officers of the Child Welfare Branch, who are all experienced nurses.

At the end of the year there were 1,007 children maintained in 797 licensed foster-homes. Of these, 655 homes had one child each, 93 had two children each, 36 had three children each, 10 had four children each, 1 home had five children, 1 had six children, and 1 had seven children. The payments by relatives for the maintenance of each child ranged from 5s. to £3 3s. a week, the average rate of payment being approximately 15s. 4d. per week.

Adoptions.—By an arrangement with the Department of Justice, all applications for adoptions are investigated by Child Welfare Officers before being dealt with by a Magistrate. During the year 371 children were adopted, and in 36 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, 65 were under the age of six months, 37 between the age of six and twelve months, 168 between the age of one and five years, 52 between the age of five and ten years, and 49 between the age of ten and fifteen years.

INVESTIGATION OF ILLEGITIMATE BIRTHS.

The Child Welfare Act provides for the investigation and supervision, where necessary, of all infants born out of wedlock. During the year the number of cases investigated was 1,383, of which no less than 357 were placed in foster-homes licensed under the provisions of the Infants Act. A certain number of these infants (91), through the inability of the mothers to provide properly for them, were committed to the care of the branch and placed out in foster-homes, under the child-welfare system. The remainder of the cases were suitably provided for either by their own parents or by relatives, or by admission to private institutions, and in such a manner not calling for the intervention of the Department. In a great many of these cases the assistance given by the Child Welfare Officers has been the means not only of re-establishing the mothers in the community, but also of obtaining payments from the men responsible for their condition. The work in connection with the social readjustment of these cases is of considerable importance so far as the taxpayers are concerned. In many cases the timely intervention of the Child Welfare Officers obviates the necessity for the committal of these infants to the care of the State, the parents being made to realize their responsibilities in regard to their offspring.

INSPECTION OF ORPHANAGES.

The inspection and registration of all private institutions for children are provided for in the Child Welfare Amendment Act, 1927. The definition of a "children's home" does not include any institution conducted wholly for educational purposes. Altogether there are approximately seventy private and denominational institutions for children throughout the Dominion, and so far sixty have been inspected by the Child Welfare Branch officers and granted registration.

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

The pupils under instruction at the School for the Deaf, Sumner, during the year, numbered 117, and of these 11 were day pupils and 106 boarders.

The special day classes in Auckland, Wellington, and Dunedin, for partially deaf children and for children with speech-defects, were continued with highly suc-