

The Government youth centres are jointly administered by the Education and Labour Departments. Their activities, which have a Dominion-wide objective, are co-ordinated by centres operating in Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch, by a special organization in Dunedin, and in the secondary towns by the Placement Officers. In Dunedin an arrangement obtains under which the Dunedin Vocational Guidance Association (a welfare organization in existence some time before the launching of the youth centres) co-operates with the latter in carrying out vocational guidance and juvenile placement work.

The work of vocational analysis, guidance, and occupational psychopathy administered by the Education Department is carried on throughout the Dominion by the Girls' and Boys' Vocational Guidance Officers appointed to the centres by that Department. In an increasing number of schools—primary, secondary, and technical—Careers Masters and Mistresses co-operating with the centres have been appointed. To them fall the tasks of recording the vocational interests and aptitudes of pupils under their observation, tendering vocational advice to children, and in all respects acting as lieutenants of the Vocational Guidance Officers attached to the centres. These latter officers are thus enabled to map careers from the guidance criteria evolved by them, while, in turn, the Placement Branch at each Centre dovetails the findings of guidance activities with the work of youth placement.

The Employment Division of the Labour Department controls the placement activities of the youth centres. Appointed by it, the Secretary and Girls' Employment Officer attached to each centre co-operate with the Girls' and Boys' Vocational Guidance Officers, referring young people to the recommended vacancies which are notified to the centres. The main contact work with employers is effected by the Placement Service, which locates openings for the youth of both sexes and passes the information to the youth centre. Youth centre staffs also, as in the case of Placement Officers, pay follow-up visits to employers and employees to ensure that placements have been successful. In the secondary and smaller towns State Placement Officers co-operate with the Vocational Guidance and Employment Officers of the four main centres and with school authorities to secure the harmonious placement of school-leavers and young people in search of careers.

The early history of vocational guidance and youth employment in New Zealand is mainly a record of the endeavours of persons and welfare bodies interested in securing the satisfactory absorption of young people into careers for which they were adapted. As the depression brought the problem of unemployment among young people more acutely before public notice, Boys' and Girls' Employment Committees came to be established in many towns. These committees were for the most part drawn from the personnel of welfare organizations as well as individual citizens interested in the employment of juveniles. In the particular case of Dunedin, a Vocational Guidance Association was formed in 1930, and it supplemented its guidance activities among young people by placement work. It co-operated with the various schools in the district, arranging in collaboration with them a system of vocational recording, supported by psychological research where this was considered necessary.

In November, 1936, a conference of vocational guidance workers from the main centres was arranged and the question of extending vocational guidance work in New Zealand discussed. To secure a uniform planned approach to vocational guidance and to co-ordinate the work of the many school-teachers acting as Careers Advisers, the conference recommended that the Government should undertake the responsibility of administering guidance work in the Dominion—a start to be made in the four main centres. Effect was given to this recommendation towards the end of 1937, when Boys' and Girls' Vocational Guidance Officers were appointed in the four principal cities. With the exception of Dunedin, where the Boys' Vocational Guidance Officer, who is the Secretary of the Vocational Guidance Association in operation there, and a full-time guidance and placement official, the Vocational Guidance Officers appointed are school-teachers devoting half of their working-time to guidance work. Early in 1938 arrangements were made between the Education and Labour Departments to link both forms of activity—guidance and placement—in youth-centre organizations to be established in the main cities. This was done, centres being opened in the first three cities, and the special arrangement mentioned above in respect of Dunedin being confirmed. The Government youth centres thus came into being.

YOUTH-EMPLOYMENT STATISTICS.

During the twelve months ended 31st March, 1939, enrolments of girls and boys at the youth centres in Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch and at the Dunedin Vocational Guidance Association totalling 4,443 were recorded. In the same period placements totalling 3,843 were effected.

The following table gives Dominion figures of enrolments and placements recorded during this period (1st April, 1938, to 31st March, 1939):—

Enrolments.			Placements.				
Girls.	Boys.	Total.	Girls.		Boys.		Total.
			Permanent.	Temporary.	Permanent.	Temporary.	
1,787	2,656	4,443	1,295	178	1,974	396	3,843

(N.B.—The Youth Service, in classifying placements permanent and temporary, has adopted the same basis as the State Placement Service—that is to say, positions filled for a duration of three months or over are treated as permanent, while those which are not expected to last for three months are considered temporary.)