

1943
NEW ZEALAND.

EDUCATION: CHILD WELFARE, STATE CARE OF CHILDREN, SPECIAL SCHOOLS, AND INFANT-LIFE PROTECTION

[In continuation of E.-4, 1942]

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency

21st June, 1943.

SIR,—

In presenting my report on the work of the Child Welfare Branch for the year ended 31st March, 1943, I would again refer those interested to E.-4, 1939, for fuller information respecting the functions of the Branch and other details.

Staffing.—Although we lost the services of several officers through war service and retirement, an endeavour is being made to carry on by the appointment of temporary officers. It is recognized that it is more than ever important that there should be no slackening in the supervision of the young ones placed in our care or in our efforts to meet the growing needs for a little extra supervision and care of children during these abnormal times.

Government Institutions.—Our child welfare institutions were kept fairly full during the year, and at the 31st March, 1943, there were 250 children in residence. At the home at Christchurch for the training of older girls a junior section to provide for better classification of the inmates is in process of erection. The health of the inmates on the whole, was very good.

Placement in Foster-homes.—Increasing difficulty is being experienced in finding a sufficiency of suitable homes to take and care for State children. At the 31st March there were 2,034 so placed, and I take this opportunity of expressing grateful thanks to all those foster-parents who, for years past in many cases, have given homes to our State wards.

The policy of foster-care of children which has been in operation in New Zealand for some sixty years has proved an undoubted success. It is proposed to renew our efforts to find special foster-homes for the placement of some of the difficult children in lieu of placing them in institutions.

Education.—At the 31st March last 245 State wards were receiving post-primary education. Of these, 85 were taking technical courses, 9 commercial, 2 home science, and 13 Maori children were attending Maori colleges. The remainder were taking professional and other courses.

I wish to thank the principals and teachers of schools for their active interest in our children who attended their schools.

Placement in Employment.—At the 31st March there were 1,315 children placed in employment. There were 447 in farm situations, 242 in factories, 134 in shops and offices, 228 in domestic work, and the remaining children were placed in some thirty different occupations. Of the total number, 63 are apprenticed, and 331 were receiving some assistance (board, clothing, fees, books, &c.) from the Department in the early stages of their employment.

When the time comes for placing out, care is taken in choosing the right kind of employment and the right kind of employer to meet the needs of the individual child. The services of Vocational Guidance Officers are frequently utilized in this connection.

Discharges.—During the year 538 children were discharged from control. The average age at discharge was seventeen years eight months. Each child is discharged as soon as he reaches a stage where he can fend for himself and assistance from the Department is no longer regarded as essential.

Honorary Child Welfare Officers.—The Branch is fortunate in having the services of honorary Child Welfare Officers, both men and women, numbering about 200. These officers assist with child welfare work generally, and when required attend the Courts in the interests of children. The success which has attended our efforts during the year has been due in no small degree to the gratuitous services given by these officers, for which I express grateful appreciation.

Committals and Admissions.—The total number of new admissions during the year was 745, as against 674 the previous year. It will be noted in Table 4 that there was an increase in the number of children admitted to homes on warrant or placed under supervision and ordered to remain in residence for a period.

Adoptions.—The number of orders of adoption made by Magistrates during the year was 685, this being 80 in excess of last year's total, which at the time was a record for any one year. The ages of the children adopted varied from a few days to just under twenty-one years, though the great majority were in the group from infants up to five years of age.

Registered Children's Homes.—One additional home was registered during the year, making a total of 82, and these are subject to inspection by departmental officers. Some of the institution authorities who had building or improvement programmes in hand have of necessity been required to hold them over at present.

Returns submitted by these homes show the number of children in residence at the 31st December, 1942, as 2,789, compared with 2,970 the previous year. With respect to parentage, it was reported that in the case of 213 children both parents were dead, in the case of 257 the father was dead, and in the case of 561 the mother was dead.

Infant-life Protection.—The number of homes registered under the Infants Act at the 31st December last was 607, and the number of children placed therein was 665. The foster-homes were visited regularly by the Child Welfare Officers to ensure that the health and general welfare of the infants were adequately safeguarded.

In 16 cases a Child Welfare Officer was appointed as conciliator under the Domestic Proceedings Act, 1939. Reports by Child Welfare Officers were also asked for in 51 cases by Magistrates and Judges where the custody of the children was concerned in Court proceedings.

Maori Children.—The policy of dealing with these children in their own homes or localities, as far as practicable, is being continued with success. In many cases good results are obtained by placing the children in another district in selected homes with suitable safeguards regarding supervision. Some of the honorary Child Welfare Officers, including members of the Maori race, have given valuable help in the placement and care of such children. A proposal for the establishment of a home for the training of the more difficult type of Maori girl is at present under consideration.

Edward Costley Trust, Auckland.—The number of children, including State wards, who were helped by the trustees with educational courses, apprenticeships, &c., during the year was 62. In deciding cases the trustees require a report from the Auckland District Child Welfare Officer. The help which is given from year to year by this trust has been a very great benefit to large numbers of young children. From reports furnished to the trustees it must be gratifying to them to know that the children concerned appreciated what had been done and made the best use of the assistance granted.

Illegitimate Births.—Inquiries were made by Child Welfare Officers during the year in the case of 1,198 illegitimate births which were notified to them confidentially by Registrars. It is satisfactory to report that in most instances the mother or other relatives were able to make satisfactory arrangements for the care of the infant. The Child Welfare Officers were in many cases able to arrange for assistance to be given or to help the mother with affiliation proceedings. From information supplied by the Registrar-General the numbers of illegitimate births during the past four years respectively (exclusive of Maoris) are 1,133, 1,284, 1,281, and 1,339 for 1942.

Special Residential Schools.—Schools for the Deaf: Owing to war conditions, these schools continue to function at Auckland and Christchurch. The total roll number when the schools closed for the vacation in December, 1942, was 110, and when they reopened in February the number was 126. The health of the children at both places was, on the whole, very good during the year, and although the present accommodation is hardly as satisfactory as one could wish, still the teachers are doing a good job of work and the children are progressing satisfactorily.

Schools for Backward Children: At Otekaieke School for backward boys there were 126 inmates in residence at the 31st March, and at Richmond School for backward girls there were 57 in residence at the 31st March. These institutions provide for those children who for various reasons cannot be catered for at special classes. Handwork is an important feature in the curriculum, and at each school provision is made for continued training to fit those who are retained beyond the ordinary school period to take their place in the community in some suitable occupation.

New Zealand Institute for the Blind: This institute, situated at Auckland, is administered by a board of trustees, on which the Government is represented. Certain children not admitted by private arrangement are admitted as Government pupils. There were at the 31st March 18 such pupils in residence.

Conferences of Child Welfare Officers.—During the year conferences of Child Welfare Officers and others connected with welfare work were held at Dunedin, Christchurch, and Wellington. It is proposed to hold the remaining one at Auckland in the near future. The principal subjects discussed were the amending of general regulations, co-ordination of services, improved methods in placement of children, records and case histories, leisure-time activities, and preventive work in all its phases.

At one session of each conference, district representatives of other Government services concerned, including the teaching profession and the Health Department, the churches, managers of private institutions, and representatives of private organizations, were invited. At these sessions the chief aims were to let outside organizations know what the Department was doing, to ascertain what the private organizations were contemplating to meet current problems, and to invite suggestions for better co-ordination of child welfare work. It is felt that as the result of these conferences there is a better understanding by all concerned of the problems involved and that foundations were laid for fuller co-operation in the future.

Preventive Work.—The work of the Branch during the year tended to increase so far as its preventive work is concerned. The total number of children supervised under

preventive supervision at the end of the year was 1,978. The visiting and inquiry work of Welfare Officers has been rendered difficult on account of necessary restrictions upon means of transport; further, owing to the absence of a number of parents on military duties and the consequent slackening of home control, there has been necessity for increased inquiries and visits by officers to homes in the interests of children and young people, who are inclined to become unsettled under war conditions.

I consider that it is in the sphere of preventive work that our best energies should be directed. Through the co-ordinated efforts of the nursing and medical profession, the churches, the teachers and welfare workers, and the parents every effort should be made to direct the children's lives in accordance with socially accepted standards and to prevent them from appearing before Courts for offences. While the Children's Courts must form a most important part of our child welfare system, still I am of the opinion that our work should be centred more around the preventive side of the work. From my experience I feel that many well-intentioned parents do not adopt right attitudes towards their children, and this is a predisposing cause of child delinquency. Some parents neglect their children to the extent that decisive action becomes imperative by the authorities. In a number of these cases continued contact by the Welfare Officers often proves effective. On the other hand, it has been found that many parents welcome and adopt sympathetic suggestions and advice regarding the training of their children, and an increasing number are applying to our officers for guidance and help. In the course of its preventive work where inquiries were made regarding living-conditions, the Department was enabled in a number of cases to arrange for assistance to be given and thus preserve the family unit. In cases presenting unusual difficulties, the assistance of the clinics attached to the University colleges and the services of psychiatrists of the Mental Hospitals Department are availed of.

Children's Courts and Delinquency.—Table 2 appended shows that for the year ended 31st March, there was an increase of 135 in the total number of children appearing before the Courts—3,071, as against 2,936 the previous year. This total includes children brought up on all counts, including indigency and other complaints not necessarily casting any reflection on the conduct of the child. There was not unexpectedly an increase (102) in the number of children dealt with as not under proper control. All those who were required to answer specific charges for offences are grouped together, and it will be noted that, compared with last year, there was an increase of only 25 in this group. At times a child may have a dozen charges preferred against him at the one sitting of the Court, but it has never been the practice of the Department to account for these separate charges. Also, there are times when a child coming before the Court as "not under proper control" may have committed some offence. Then, again, many minor cases—mischief, &c.—are quite properly dealt with by the police and Child Welfare Officers without recourse to the Court; this has always been the practice. After allowing for all these factors, our method of recording each year gives a fair indication of the incidence of juvenile delinquency as a whole. Of the 2,446 children appearing before Courts for offences, 364 had appeared at some time previously for offences. New Zealand has adopted what is regarded by many overseas authorities as too high a standard in assessing recidivism, since it sets no time-limit for the intervening period since the committal of the first offence. The figures should be read in the light of this rather stringent condition.

The number of children appearing before the Courts on all counts is 4.6 per cent. above the number for last year, and this is the first increase since the beginning of the war. The increase in the number of children answering charges for offences, however, is only 1 per cent., and even if we allow a margin for offences in those cases where children were dealt with by the Courts as "not under proper control," the increase for the year is still only approximately 3 per cent. In view of the present conditions, this increase is not surprising; but no one connected with child welfare can be satisfied with any rise, however small, and all social agencies—State, churches, and private—must increase their efforts for our young people in these difficult times. In dealing with the children the Courts continue to use freely the provision to place children for a period under the legal supervision of Child Welfare Officers. The results obtained in this direction are very satisfactory.

British Children.—At the 31st March the total number of boys and girls evacuated from Great Britain to this Dominion and under my legal supervision was 204. With one or two exceptions, these had then been residing here about two and a half years. Seventy-seven of them were attending primary, and 82 post-primary schools, while 45 had left school. Of those who had left school, 1 boy and 1 girl are attending University full time; 3 girls and 1 boy are attending teachers' training colleges; 4 boys and 1 girl were appointed to positions in the Public Service; 6 boys are farming; 2 boys are apprenticed and others placed with that object in view; and the remainder are engaged in various occupations in shops, offices, &c. Thirteen of the children who are working are still attending night classes at technical schools. The health of the children has been very good. In a few cases where the children met with accidents or required minor operations the patients responded readily to treatment. The children are eager to help with the war effort, and the majority of the older boys are connected with the national services in one form or another (Air Training Corps, Emergency Precautions Scheme, or Home Guard). For various causes it was necessary to arrange for the transfer of 25 children during the year to new homes. The reason for the majority of the changes was the illness of the foster-parent or some other cause not reflecting upon either the foster-parent or the child.

The reports received on all the children indicate very satisfactory progress at school or at work. They keep in close touch with their parents, and in this, as in other matters, they have the fullest assistance from their foster-parents in New Zealand.

J. R. McCLUNE, Superintendent.

The Director of Education, Wellington.

TABLE 1.—NUMBER OF CHILDREN UNDER CONTROL AND SUPERVISION

The total number of children under the supervision of the Child Welfare Branch as at the 31st March, 1943, was 8,747, classified under the following headings, the corresponding number for the previous year (ended 31st March, 1942) being also given :—

	1941-42.	1942-43.		1941-42.	1942-43.
<i>State wards—</i>			<i>Other than State wards—</i>		
In foster-homes, hostels, and with friends	2,563	2,641	Young persons supervised by Child Welfare Officers in their own homes, with relatives or with friends, pursuant to Orders of Courts	1,123	1,301
In situations (includes 20 absent without leave at 31st March, 1942, and 21 at 31st March, 1943)	1,106	1,105	Infants supervised in foster-homes registered under the Infants Act	627	665
In Government institutions, receiving-homes, &c.	231	223	Pupils at the School for the Deaf, Sumner	110	126
In private institutions	127	98	Pupils at schools for mentally backward (Otekaike and Richmond) (see also under "State wards")	52	45
In Roman Catholic institutions recognized under the Child Welfare Act	98	95	Children supervised as preventive cases	1,960	1,978
In special schools for mentally backward children (see also pupils under "Other than State wards")	131	138	Children in New Zealand Institute for the Blind for whom the Department makes payment	19	18
In refuges or cognate institutions ..	36	59		3,891	4,133
In hospitals, convalescent homes, &c. ..	26	36		8,221	8,543
In residential colleges	12	15			
	4,330	4,410	Total	8,221	8,543
			British children in New Zealand ..	203	204

TABLE 2.—TOTAL NUMBER OF CHILDREN APPEARING BEFORE CHILDREN'S COURTS
(Classified according to complaints or charges laid)

	1940-41.	1941-42.	1942-43.
<i>Complaints under the Child Welfare Act—</i>			
Indigent	208	141	159
Not under proper control	175	212	314
Living in a detrimental environment	97	83	106
Neglected	30	79	46
	510	515	625
<i>Offences—</i>			
Offences against morality	9	25	11
Offences against the person	81	30	63
<i>Other offences—</i>			
(a) Theft	1,121	1,037	1,127
(b) Conversion of motor-vehicles ..	133	87	61
(c) Other conversions	507	83	85
(d) Miscellaneous, chiefly mischief	66	474	396
Delinquent	207	246	246
Breaches of Court supervision orders	10	19	20
<i>Breaches of special Acts or regulations—</i>			
Railways	40	33	10
Fire brigades	4	12	12
Acclimatization	9	5	4
Licensing	23	2	39
Arms	43	34	34
Post and Telegraph	68	81	86
Shipping .. ..	..	4	11
<i>Traffic—</i>			
(a) Regulations	173	62	70
(b) Cycle	55	11	89
Motor-vehicles .. ..	..	..	..
<i>City or borough by-laws—</i>			
(a) Other than cycling	82	215	10
(b) Cycle .. ..	..	..	62
Emergency War Regulations .. ..	..	..	10
	2,424	2,421	2,446
Total	2,934	2,933	3,071

TABLE 3.—COMPARATIVE STATEMENT SHOWING THE ACTION TAKEN IN RESPECT OF CHILDREN WHO APPEARED BEFORE CHILDREN'S COURTS

	1940-41.	1941-42.	1942-43.
Committed to the care of Superintendent	548	564	596
Placed under supervision	862	867	991
Supervision extended	23	32	26
Supervision with residence	7	14	29
Informal supervision	1	..	..
Admonished and discharged	798	582	665
Admonished, discharged, and ordered to make restitution	198	242	264
Admonished and ordered to pay costs	31	20	17
Admonished and fined	10	36	45
Adjourned	43	91	90
Adjourned <i>sine die</i>	24	29	18
Dismissed	70	47	59
Committed to Borstal	40	36	42
Convicted and fined	4	3	7
Convicted and discharged	5	1	1
Convicted and ordered to come up for sentence	1	..	1
Returned to the care of the Superintendent	60	68	42
Withdrawn	11	23	15
Ordered to come up for sentence	16	6	5
Probation	13	10	21
Referred to the Magistrates' Court	1	4	1
Fined	85	65	66
Ordered to pay costs	..	..	..
License cancelled	1	2	1
Remanded	6	..	..
By-law cases—			
Admonished and discharged	34	105	26
Admonished and ordered to pay costs	..	..	4
Convicted and fined and ordered to pay costs or convicted and ordered to pay costs	..	2	..
Fined and ordered to pay costs or ordered to pay costs	41	77	39
Dismissed	1	6	..
Adjourned	..	3	..
Convicted and discharged	..	1	..
Total	2,934	2,936	3,071

TABLE 4.—CHILDREN PLACED UNDER SUPERVISION OF CHILD WELFARE OFFICERS BY COURTS DURING YEARS ENDED 31ST MARCH, 1942 AND 1943

(Classified according to reasons for appearance)

	Boys.		Girls.		Totals.	
	1941-42.	1942-43.	1941-42.	1942-43.	1941-42.	1942-43.
Charged with an offence	596	616	53	80	649	696
Delinquent	136	132	19	32	155	164
Not under proper control	40	96	27	47	67	143
In detrimental environment	1	8	8	11	9	19
Indigent	4	..	..	1	4	1
Neglected	10	3	10	6	20	9
Total	787	855	117	177	904	1,032

NOTE.—Table regarding Court records shows 991 placed under supervision. The difference is accounted for by the number of adjourned cases from the previous year being dealt with during 1942-43.

TABLE 5.—CAUSES OF COMMITTAL AND ADMISSION, 1942-43

	Boys.		Girls.		Totals.	
	1941-42.	1942-43.	1941-42.	1942-43.	1941-42.	1942-43.
Indigent.. ..	79	92	60	67	139	159
Not under proper control	68	78	65	77	133	155
Delinquent	33	31	4	16	37	47
Charged with an offence	122	109	13	19	135	128
Living in a detrimental environment ..	31	24	30	37	61	61
Neglected	22	17	27	17	49	34
Breach of supervision order	1	5	9	5	10	10
Supervision with residence	11	14	3	15	14	29
	367	370	211	253	578	623
Temporary admission	11	14	7	16	18	30
Admitted under section 12, Child Welfare Act, 1925	11	6	..	7	11	13
Admitted on warrant	23	30	24	39	47	69
Admitted under section 127 of Education Act	8	8	12	2	20	10
	53	58	43	64	96	122
	420	428	254	317	674	745

NOTE.—Of the total in 1942-43 172, or 23 per cent., were illegitimate.

Approximate Cost of Paper.—Preparation, not given ; printing (873 copies), £14 10s.