

1944
NEW ZEALAND

EDUCATION:

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

[In continuation of E.-4, 1943]

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

SIR,—

28th July, 1944.

I have the honour to present my report on the work of the Child Welfare Branch for the year ended 31st March, 1944. In doing so I wish, by way of introduction, to mention briefly its main activities, viz:—

- (1) Preventive work—that is, the inquiry in the early stages into cases of difficulty with children or of bad adjustment in the home, with a view to applying remedial measures or to arranging for assistance in cases of need;
- (2) Supervision and general placement and care of all children committed to the care of the Department through the Children's Courts;
- (3) Administration of State institutions for children and young people who cannot be placed in the community, including institutions for handicapped children;
- (4) Visiting and oversight of all children placed by the Courts under the legal supervision of Child Welfare Officers;
- (5) Inquiry and investigation of all cases coming before Children's Courts;
- (6) Inquiries into cases of illegitimate births, to ensure that proper provision is being made for each child, and for the mother where necessary;
- (7) Administration of the Infants Act (Part V), licensing of foster-homes, and supervision of infants placed therein;
- (8) Inquiry into applications for adoption of children;
- (9) Registration and inspection of private institutions and children's homes.

Staffing.—Although some additional women field officers were appointed during the year we are still understaffed on the men's side. Travelling restrictions imposed as a war necessity have made the work of visiting more difficult and lessened somewhat those contacts between Welfare Officers and children which are so necessary for satisfactory adjustments to be made. The officers, however, have all worked long hours to keep their work up to a reasonable standard. During the year the Boys' Welfare Officer attached to the Head Office was transferred to another Branch of the Department. A Male Inspector of Child Welfare was appointed and has taken up his new duties. I regret having to record the death of two promising officers—Mr. McCabe and Mr. C. Wilson-Grant. The former, who died on active service, was attached to the teaching staff of the Special School for Boys at Otekaieke, and the latter, who was Manager of the Boys' Training Centre, Levin, died after a brief illness.

We have drawn our officers in the past principally from the teaching and nursing services or services connected with youth organizations of various kinds. We can provide for training on the job, and I am pleased to say that the welfare officers, including the juniors appointed during recent years, have taken courses of study and reading to fit them better for their work. We are looking forward to the establishment by the University colleges of special courses for those taking up social service work.

A commencement has been made with the appointment of trainees to the clerical and institutional divisions of the Branch with a view to their qualifying for field-work later.

The efficiency test for Child Welfare Officers conducted by the Public Service Commissioner provides for a high standard of knowledge and efficiency. It is satisfactory to note that many officers were successful in passing the examinations.

Honorary Child Welfare Officers.—In order to assist the Department with the supervision of young children appearing before the Courts and with other children in need of care, honorary Child Welfare Officers are appointed by the Hon. the Minister, more especially in suburban and country districts. This policy has proved of very material help in the conduct of child welfare work. The number has now increased to 250 men and women in all walks of life, all animated by an earnest desire to do something useful for those in need. By this means closer contact can be made with the children than it would be possible for the permanent officers of the Department to provide. I wish to take this opportunity of recording the Department's grateful thanks for the gratuitous services so freely rendered by them during the year.

Opening of New Districts.—In order to cope better with the work, approval was given by the Minister for the establishment of child welfare centres in four new districts—