

at Napier, Miss G. G. Meddins, Principal of the Special School for Girls at Richmond, and Mr. A. S. Sutton-Turner, on the clerical staff at Head Office. Mr. P. Goodwin, District Child Welfare Officer at Wellington, resigned on account of ill health. These and the other officers who retired have all given loyal and conscientious service to the Department.

The field staff has been strengthened by additional appointments, and this has afforded relief to those older officers who carried heavy case-loads during the war years. This relief was particularly needed in those country districts where, despite a large increase in the volume of work, staffing had remained for many years at the level of one male and one female officer. With the exception of one minor district and two sub-districts, all country districts have now been supplied with assistant field officers, both male and female.

The minimum educational requirement for appointees to the male field staff has been raised to University Entrance standard and appointees are expected to undertake courses of study at the University colleges with a view to improving their qualifications and usefulness. There is a creditable eagerness among the field staff to undertake this study. In addition, officers are encouraged to read literature relevant to the work, and publications are made available from the Department's library for this purpose. The demand for these indicates the need for extending the library facilities.

Plans have been made to open a new child welfare district at Taumarunui early in the coming year, and a further district will be established at Blenheim when circumstances permit.

#### HONORARY CHILD WELFARE OFFICERS

To assist the Department with the supervision of children in their own homes, with the adjustment of numerous local cases involving minor behaviour problems, domestic difficulties, and general preventive work, and with the handling in the Children's Courts away from the main centres of cases presenting no unusual difficulties or unlikely to result in decisions of a drastic nature, some 250 Honorary Child Welfare Officers hold office under authority given them by the Minister. Many valuable miscellaneous duties are carried out by these men and women, mainly in localities where the permanent officers are unable to visit frequently or at short notice, and the Department appreciates not only the quantity and quality of the voluntary service they render, but also the spirit and ideals prompting them to undertake a task which is of incalculable benefit to the community. It is understood, of course, that where, for various reasons, it may not be desirable for the honorary officer to act in a certain case, our permanent officers undertake the necessary action. The Honorary Child Welfare Officer system probably achieves its most satisfying results through the regular personal contact so necessary in remedial work with children, and it would be difficult to estimate just how detrimentally the whole work of the Branch would be affected if the assistance of these public-spirited officers were not available.

#### CHILD WELFARE INSTITUTIONS

Section 19 of the Child Welfare Act, 1925, provides that children are not to be permanently maintained in institutions save in exceptional cases. Although, in pursuance of this policy, the Department generally exhausts every possible alternative means in the community for treating a child in need of adjustment, it is recognized that institutions have an important place in the child welfare scheme. Apart from the need to provide temporary care for children pending their placement in suitable foster-homes, there are those problem cases requiring the special treatment which the foster-home cannot be expected to provide.

Great difficulty is still being experienced in finding sufficient foster-homes, and, mainly for this reason, accommodation available in the Department's institutions throughout the year has been fully taxed. At the 31st March there were 316 children in residence, as against 284 at the 31st March of the previous year. The following notes about the various institutions give an indication of their functions :—