

When a child is not self-supporting, as when commencing an apprenticeship at a low rate of wages, he is regarded as on the status of "assisted service." The Department supplies his needs in clothing, dental attention, &c., and his wages are subsidized to enable him to meet his living-expenses and retain a reasonable amount of pocket-money. The subsidy is reviewed when the child receives an increase in wages and it ultimately ceases, although it is usually necessary to continue assistance with clothing, &c., for a further period.

Those children placed in employment where board and lodging is supplied, such as in farming situations for boys and in domestic situations for girls, are regarded as on "service" status. An agreement is entered into between the employer and the Department which provides, *inter alia*, for the wages to be allocated as (a) pocket-money, and (b) the balance, to be placed in a trust account in the child's name but operated on by the Superintendent.

The Department supplies free an initial outfit, but the cost of replacements and other subsequent expenditure are debited against the trust account.

Pocket-money is increased as higher wages are received and the child's needs grow greater. One of the objects of this is to train the child to appreciate the value of money, to spend it wisely, and to purchase his own clothing under supervision. As a prelude to discharge from control, which generally occurs at about the eighteenth year, he is placed for a period of six months or longer on the status of "service agreement." This means that he receives all his wages and can choose his own situations, except that his supervising officer must approve of his place of employment.

Upon discharge from control there is usually a fairly substantial credit balance in the trust account. This may be paid over at any time, but the Department as trustee endeavours to guide these young people in investing or utilizing their money to the best advantage. This is essential in those cases where the young people concerned may be mentally retarded and require in their own interests friendly supervision for a longer period than is necessary with normal youths.

NATURE OF EMPLOYMENT

At the 31st March, 1946, there were 1,069 State wards (682 boys and 387 girls) in employment. Of these, 84 (82 boys and 2 girls) were apprenticed to various trades and, of the total number, 336 (192 boys and 144 girls) were receiving assistance from the Department. Boys were employed as follows: farm hands, 356; factory hands, 73; shop-assistants, 24; labourers, 21; and the remainder, 208, in various other occupations. Girls were employed as follows: domestics, 165; factory hands, 67; shop-assistants, 37; clerks, 21; nurses, 14; and the remainder, 83, in various other occupations.

COMMITTALS AND ADMISSIONS

The number of committals by Courts was 94 fewer than the previous year—446, as against 540. Private admissions by arrangement with parents were slightly more—146, as against 142.

DISCHARGES FROM CONTROL

A total of 588 children were discharged during the year, the average age at discharge being fifteen years and ten months. They had either reached an age when they could fend for themselves or were no longer in need of care or oversight by the Department. Many of them while still quite young returned to their relatives or friends. In special cases where the young person may need continued help from the Department control is retained up to the age of twenty or twenty-one years. These are cases of mental or physical handicap or cases in which the individual requires assistance with his training course.