

successful adjustment of children appearing before them. At the same time, there is wide scope for the undertaking of preventive measures before the need for Court action arises, and it is to this aspect of its work that the Child Welfare Branch is paying increasing attention.

The practice of the Courts in using the provisions of the Child Welfare Act to place children under the supervision of Child Welfare Officers for stated periods has continued to produce satisfactory results. There were 824 supervision orders made last year.

(1) *Total Appearances*.—In last year's report a substantial decrease was noted in the figures for all children appearing before the Children's Courts. It is gratifying to record that this downward trend has been maintained during the past year. Table 2 shows a decrease of 289 in these figures—2,240, as against 2,529 for the previous year. This represents a reduction of approximately 11 per cent.

(2) *Analysis of Total Appearances*.—(a) Complaints under the Child Welfare Act: Children appearing under this section were indigent, not under proper control, living in a detrimental environment, or neglected. There were 454 cases, as against 517 for the previous year and 583 for the 1943–44 year. This represents reductions of approximately 12 per cent. and 11 per cent. respectively, or a total reduction over the past two years of 22 per cent. Further analysis shows that this reduction lies mainly in the "not under proper control" group.

(b) *Offences*: The total numbers of appearances before the Courts for all offences, including breaches of special Acts, regulations, and by-laws, over the past three years are as follows: 1943–44, 2,493; 1944–45, 2,012; and 1945–46, 1,786. These numbers show reductions of 19 per cent. and 11 per cent. respectively, or a total reduction over the two years of 28 per cent.

The decrease is reflected generally in the figures for all types of offences, including those against morality and against the person, but the most marked decrease is found in the figures for theft, which, from 1,132 in the year 1943–44, dropped to 993 for 1944–45 and to 847 for last year.

The total of appearances for breaches of special Acts, traffic regulations, and by-laws is 237, as against 281 and 406 for the 1944–45 and 1943–44 periods respectively. This is a reduction of approximately 15 per cent. from the figures for 1944–45 and a total reduction over the two years of 42 per cent.

(3) *District Court Appearances*.—The decrease for total Court appearances reflects generally the position in the separate child welfare districts. Only four districts, Hamilton-Rotorua, New Plymouth, Wellington, and Dunedin, recorded increases on the figures for the previous year.

For offences, increases are recorded in the Hamilton-Rotorua, New Plymouth, Masterton, and Wellington areas, all other centres showing decreases, slight in some cases but marked in others.

(4) *Possible Reasons for Decrease*.—In last year's report several conditions were suggested as possibly helping to explain the decrease then recorded, which, it was hoped, indicated a return to more normal conditions. These were the lessening of war tension, the return of fathers to their homes from military duties, the work of visiting teachers, and the intensified preventive work of the Branch. Such conditions have now obtained for two years. In addition, an improvement in the man-power position following the cessation of hostilities has enabled the field staff to be strengthened, with advantage to the Department's preventive programme.

(5) *Repeaters*.—The number of children who, on appearing before the Courts last year, were making a second or subsequent appearance for offences was 339. The corresponding numbers for the three previous years were: 1943, 364; 1944, 368; and 1945, 302. In selecting these cases a very wide interpretation is given to the term "repeater." No time limit is set between the child's first and second or subsequent Court appearance for offences, nor is the degree of seriousness of an offence taken into account. The totals include, therefore, many cases of offences of a minor nature, and frequently a considerable period has expired before an appearance at Court is repeated.