

27. Do you, as representing the Department, approve of her methods of dealing with the cases here generally?—When I first began to come to Te Oranga Home I had an idea that the Matron was perhaps a little bit on the hard side in her treatment of the girls. I have absolutely changed that opinion. She has, I think, a thoroughly good manner with her. In an institution of this sort you must have a woman who is prepared to assert herself, otherwise the girls would simply ride over her.

28. Does she combine kindness with firmness, so far as you have seen?—There is no doubt about that.

29. Are the girls as a whole fond of her, so far as you can see?—I should say so, decidedly. Their free manner with her leads me to think they certainly are; and it is the manner of the inmates to the managers and other members of the staff that we mostly go by in forming an opinion as to the relations between the officers and children.

30. In addition to the qualities you are giving the Matron credit for, have you found that she has ability as well?—Yes; I should say Mrs. Branting is distinctly an able woman, and a woman exceptionally well qualified for this position. And it is a position that I regard as the most difficult of all the positions under the Industrial Schools Acts.

31. With regard to the treatment of the children generally, do you think they are overworked at this wood-chopping?—No. I am quite sure there is nothing in that. I agree with those witnesses who say that the girls regard the thing more as a pastime than as a labour.

32. You have seen the letters in the papers saying the girls are doing men's work?—That is absurd.

33. You have had that under your own supervision for many years?—Yes. I have seen them frequently at work here, and girls of whom perhaps I had a more thorough knowledge than others, and who knew me, have made jocular remarks about their work.

35. If you, as representing the Department, had seen at any time that the girls were doing improper tasks, or tasks too difficult for them, would you have stopped them?—Most certainly.

36. Have your remarks the same application to the question of the lupins?—I have never seen the girls working in the lupins, because I was not here between October and December, when the girls were working there.

37. Have the girls an opportunity of making complaints to you?—Oh, yes; the girls have made complaints to me. In fact, it is one of the battle-cries here, "I will tell Mr. Pope." When the girls are brought before me they generally run away giggling and laughing. In one instance I insisted on a girl coming up and telling me about her grievance, but she laughed and said it was all over, and she had nothing to say.

38. Has any girl at any time made a serious complaint to you about Mrs. Branting or any attendant?—Never.

39. From what you can see, do the members of the staff treat the girls, when the Matron is not present, improperly in any way?—I have never seen anything that would lead me to bring the matter under the notice of the Matron; in fact, I should say from my visits that there is a very good feeling between the staff and the girls.

40. And equally between the Matron and the staff?—I think so.

41. There was one little episode in regard to Miss Howden. Some time ago some complaint was made about Miss Howden, and some letters were sent to the Department?—Yes.

42. Did the Department deal with that matter itself?—The position is this: I came to Te Oranga Home on the last day of the year. Mrs. Branting, in the course of a talk about institution matters, brought out two or three sheets of paper, and said to me, "Mr. Pope, I do not know how to deal with this matter. I would be very pleased if you would look it over and give me your advice." The sheets that she produced were those statements made by the girls B—— and B—— against Miss Howden, and contained Miss Howden's denial. I read them over, and my first impulse was to say to Mrs. Branting, "Why do you not exercise your powers and terminate Miss Howden's engagement?" On thinking it over, I said to her, "Seeing there has been so much public agitation against Te Oranga Home your best plan will be to send these statements to Wellington with a covering memorandum." The statements were sent to Wellington, and at the same time a letter was forwarded by the Matron from Miss Howden to the Department complaining about her position at Te Oranga Home, and alleging that she was made to do work here that she had not been engaged to do. In the course of conversation with me, Mrs. Branting told me that these statements were made under such circumstances as to make her entirely lose confidence in Miss Howden. She told me, as, of course, I knew, that it was absolutely impossible to keep a member of the staff at the Home in whom she had not confidence. When these reached Wellington the Secretary for Education was absent in the North. I acknowledged both memoranda to the Matron, and told her they would receive consideration. Sir Edward Gibbes's return to Wellington was delayed, and then I, regarding the matter as a very serious one, put the letters before the Minister myself. My recommendation was this: that as Mrs. Branting had quite lost confidence in Miss Howden, and Miss Howden was so dissatisfied with her position at the Home, and in view of the other corroborative statements Mrs. Branting made to me, the best thing to do was to ask Miss Howden to resign her position, we paying her a month's salary. The Minister approved that recommendation. Mrs. Branting shortly afterwards reported to the Department that Miss Howden did not see her way to resign. Then the only course open to the Department was to dispense with Miss Howden's services. We did so, offering her a month's salary, which she declined to accept.

43. What are the usual terms on which you engage attendants? What notice are they to receive?—A month's notice.

44. So in giving her a month's notice you simply did what you would have done to any other attendant?—Yes.

45. Miss Howden says she was to get £60 in eight weeks' time. Have you the letter that was sent up to the Department?—This is it: "Te Oranga Home, Christchurch, 4th January, 1908.—