

generally settle down with a suitable foster-mother. I think the Department has cause to be grateful to the foster-parents for the work they do—they watch over and train the children as if they were their own.

As to suggestions for the improvement of the boarding-out system, I should like to see the rate of payment increased to 10s. per week until a child is two years old. I think reducing the payment to 7s. when a child is in the middle of teething troubles, and getting into more mischief than when it was six months old, is very hard on the foster-mothers. I think 8s. a week should be paid for girls until they are fourteen. Girls at school all day do not do very much work for the foster-mother, and from twelve to fourteen years their clothing is more expensive than it has ever been. The women grumble very much at receiving 6s.

The longer I have to do with placing girls of fourteen at service the more I am impressed with the fact that they are too young to leave their foster-homes and go among strangers. Many of them have had no advantage either physically or mentally until they entered the school—they are backward in every way; and even girls who have been in good homes and have attended school regularly for years are only children when fourteen, and physically as well as in character unfit for service, or, rather, I should say they would have a better chance of being strong capable women in after-life if left at board until fifteen years of age. I would like to see a change in this direction.

I think 8s. should be paid for boys until they are fourteen, unless they are placed on farms and assist with the milking, when I think 5s. would be sufficient to pay for them. Lately the foster-parents have complained bitterly of the low payment while the cost of living has been so high.

Another thing that caused a good deal of friction is the supply of school-books. I sincerely wish the Department would pay for them. Could not the teacher provide books for the industrial-school children, and the children be answerable to him for the books, and be punished by him if the books were lost or destroyed through carelessness? I know of good foster-homes closed to our children on account of what people have called "the unreasonableness of expecting foster-parents to supply school material."

I am a firm believer in the boarding-out system, and should be very sorry to see it superseded by the cottage home. For one thing, the expense of the cottage home would be enormous, and I do not believe that our boys and girls would in them have the training which they get in the more natural life of the foster-homes.

I have, &c.,

The Secretary for Education, Wellington.

ELLA S. DICK, Manager.

SIR,—

Industrial School, Burnham, 11th February, 1909.

I regret the delay in my reply to your circular memorandum of the 4th November, 1908, relating to the boarding-out system. I beg to submit the following remarks:—

(a.) My experience leads me to believe that the difficulty in obtaining suitable homes is more apparent than real. When I look back on what has been done since I had to do with industrial-school children in New Zealand, I am amazed and thankful to know what a large number of suitable homes have been found. There is no doubt that a number of people simply take children for the payment offered. Such homes are undesirable. I do not think that I am overstating the case when I declare that a large proportion of our foster-parents take the children because they like to have them. In such homes the children are in bright and happy surroundings, and are brought up as members of the family. So far is this carried that it is quite common for children when grown up to address their foster-parents, in letters, as "Dear Mother." Such homes are a blessing to humanity. There are many people who would be glad to take children, but they consider the payment to be inadequate.

(b.) As far as I know, this difficulty does not arise. The greatest care has always been taken to classify the children. Very few families are without an indifferent child among them. How, then, can it be expected that all children in a foster-home shall turn out to be equally well-behaved? No known case of imbecility or moral depravity is to be found in our homes among normal children.

(c.) In my opinion our system provides for the most thorough inspection—too thorough, in the opinion of some of our foster-parents.

(d.) Are the children of depraved parents in themselves depraved? Experience refuses to dictate dogmatically on this point. In cases where such children turn out ill, they are soon located under our systematic inspection, and removed without delay.

(e.) There are not many children in our system who suffer from hereditary taint, as far as my memory serves. This is part of a big question, and one of ways and means. If the Government of New Zealand can find the money, the Education Department will have no difficulty in securing scientific treatment for the children of the State.

Cottage-home System.

This system is admirably conducted at Home, and I beg to enumerate its advantages:—

(a.) These Homes are well built, well fitted, nicely furnished, and with good environment. The managers and staff are selected by reason of their special training for the care of young children.

(b.) In my opinion, where classification is needed, it can more efficiently be carried out under this system than under the boarded-out system. The children are under the immediate supervision of certain members of the staff, each of whom has special work in the Home. Homes should be provided for (1) children of good dispositions, and free from moral blemish; (2) children of depraved habits; (3) children of weak intellect. Homes 2 and 3 should be subdivided so as to deal with the more serious cases. These Homes being under State control, the children could without magisterial proceedings be transferred to Homes suitable for them, or to industrial schools and reformatories.

(c.) I do not think that a more thorough inspection could be made under this system than obtains under our boarded-out system. Visits should be made at any hour, and the managers and staff should welcome the visitors and look upon them as co-workers.