

(d.) Separation in all its branches is carefully looked after under our system. Up to the ages of eight or nine years I see no objection to normal boys and girls being inmates of a cottage home, or up to ten years of brother and sister; but in New Zealand from ten years and upwards the sexes should be separated.

(e.) There is, in my opinion, no comparison as to the advantages of the cottage-home system over the boarded-out system in respect to scientific training and education. In the cottage-home system a daily routine of domestic work, meals, instruction, and recreation is provided for, and overlooked by trained persons. Children are taught habits of punctuality, cleanliness, and method. They are taught to assist in domestic work, the preparation of food and cooking; also to sew, wash, darn, and mend. All this daily systematic routine leads to an ordered and sure efficiency which becomes a second nature, and is invaluable when the children go out into the world. Then, again, the day commences and ends with prayer, and religious instruction is given daily.

I have enumerated the advantages of the cottage-home system; but I must, on the other hand, point out that under the boarded-out system the children live a more normal every-day life, and are less likely to be pointed out in after-life as "children of the State." Moreover, I do not consider that the cottage-home system comes within the range of practical politics. We have no means of meeting the enormous cost of establishing these homes and of their upkeep.

I feel bound to urge that a larger weekly payment should be offered to foster-parents. I am convinced that we should in this way have an abundant reward in the higher class of persons we should secure for our young children.

The Secretary for Education, Wellington.

I have, &c.,

T. ARCHEY, Manager.

SIR,—

Receiving Home, Christchurch, 23rd January, 1909.

In reply to the Department's memorandum of the 4th November last, respecting the boarding-out-system, I have to say,—

- (a.) That the difficulty of obtaining suitable homes is not so great as to make the system defective;
- (b.) That classification is possible to a large extent;
- (c.) That thorough inspection can be carried out without much difficulty;
- (d.) That there is a certain amount of risk run by the foster-parents in taking the children of depraved parents into their homes; but is there not the same risk in sending children to the State schools, which are attended by all classes of children?
- (e.) The foster-parents who take children suffering from hereditary taint and specially bad environment can be warned, and given instructions by doctors as to treatment of such cases, and care can be taken to place them with reliable foster-parents.

After sixteen years' experience of the Education Department's boarding-out system, I maintain that it is very successful in bringing up neglected and destitute children to be a gain, instead of a burden, to the country. I judge from results, and could give instances where boarded-out children (many the children of depraved parents) have turned out respectable members of the community, and, passing out of Government control at or before the age of twenty-one years, are doing well in their various situations, or are married and in comfortable homes of their own.

I believe that service-girls sent out from the Government industrial schools are superior to the general run of domestic servants, and I am sure that most of the employers will bear me out in this opinion.

The chief drawback to cottage homes, and a very serious one, I think, is that they are merely institutions on a small scale, and therefore boys and girls brought up in them can have no real family life, and no homes to return to periodically when they go out into the world to earn their own living; whereas my experience is that foster-parents and boarded-out children become greatly attached to each other, and the latter look on their foster-homes as their own, the foster-parents keeping in touch with them, and encouraging them to return for holidays and when out of situations.

Transferring the guardianship of a boy or girl from the Manager of a school to the foster-parent has been found to answer extremely well. In connection with this I may mention an instance of a foster-parent who takes over the guardianship of the boys boarded out with her as they reach the age of fourteen years, places them in good situations in her own district, looks after their clothing, and sees that they put away a good part of their wages in the Post-Office Savings-Bank. These boys all look on her as their mother, and on her house as their home.

There are some improvements with regard to rates paid for board which might be made with advantage to both children and foster-parents. I would respectfully suggest that a higher rate should be paid for inmates between the ages of twelve and fourteen years, as it seems unjust to reduce the payment to 6s. a week when it costs more to provide food, clothing, and school-books. Therefore I think that the rate of 7s. a week should be continued until the inmates reach the age of fourteen years.

With reference to the rate of payment for infants, I do not consider that 7s. a week is sufficient for the board and care of inmates under two years of age.

I beg to draw attention to the fact that religious denomination frequently causes some difficulty in boarding out, it being contrary to the regulations to place children of one denomination with foster-parents of another, even though the homes may be suitable in every other respect. For instance, a family of five children belonging to the Anglican Church may be admitted to an industrial school, and, though no foster-parent of that denomination can be found able and willing to take them, there may be several very suitable foster-parents belonging to the Presbyterian and Methodist denominations who are anxious to take charge of boarded-out children, and could easily accommodate the large number.

With regard to defective inmates, I do not think they should be placed in foster-homes; a special institution for such cases is most urgently needed.

I have, &c.,

ANNA B. COX, Manager.