

with all the facts in view, it takes the course that is dictated by the children's own interests. Even where there is a doubt the child must have the benefit of the doubt, and in very many cases it is either impossible or undesirable for the Department to disclose all the evidence on which its action is based.

#### REFORMS.

In accordance with the views above expressed important reforms have accordingly been made or are now in progress in regard to the industrial-school system, connected with which the principal institutions are as follows :—

For boys : The Nelson Training-farm, the Weraroa Training-farm, and the Burnham Industrial School.

For girls : The Te Oranga Home, the Auckland Industrial School, and the Caversham Industrial School.

For young children of both sexes : The Wellington, Nelson, and Christchurch Receiving-homes.

It was found during the year that all the residential schools were overcrowded, that the number of admissions was steadily increasing, and that definite proposals for extension had been made in the case of almost every one of the above institutions as well as for an additional school for boys. This steady increase in the number of admissions raised the question as to whether something better could not be done for neglected and delinquent children than to make so large a proportion of them resident inmates of institutions even though these were of the finest type possible. A large number of the children who come under the Industrial Schools Act are merely neglected or deserted children who require only to be given a reasonable opportunity to become normal children. Many of those who have committed offences are less to blame than their parents, who have not exercised proper control over them. Many of the children are quite young, and require the training of a home rather than the training of even the most excellent institution.

I therefore concluded that a stage had been reached in the development of the system at which the whole problem of neglected and delinquent children should be reviewed, and it was eventually considered that, as far as possible, future action should be based on the following principles :—

- (1.) That definite steps should be taken to apply the axiom "Prevention is better than cure" ;
- (2.) That it is advisable to influence parents as well as their children ;
- (3.) That neglected and delinquent children under the care of the State should be placed as far as possible under natural home conditions, and that admission to an institution should be used only as a last resort ;
- (4.) That there should be a reclassification of those resident inmates of the various institutions who could not be boarded out under ordinary conditions.

While the human aspect of the matter was thus made the basis of contemplated reforms consideration was also given to financial questions involved in the administration of this very wide system. It was found that in many respects reforms designed for the welfare of the children were also the means of effecting economy, and *vice versa*, but the general principle was followed that humanistic considerations must, within all reasonable limits, dominate financial considerations.

The following headings will give an indication of the reforms that are now in progress or have actually been established as the result of the review of the position referred to above, together with certain other proposals for which legislative and financial authority will be necessary :—

- (1.) Extension of the probation system to the four centres of population.
- (2.) Establishment of probation homes for boys at Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, and Dunedin.
- (3.) Preparation and consolidation of legislation providing for the better protection and supervision of all destitute and delinquent children and juvenile offenders ; regulation of street trading among children and the attendance of children at picture-theatres, &c. ; establishment of juvenile-employment bureaux ; and the better supervision of all private orphanages or similar institutions.