

*Lack of Parental Control ; Street Trading among Children ; too frequent Attendance of Children at Picture-theatres ; Need for Legislative Action.*

Of the 204 children charged during the year as not being under proper control, or accused or found guilty of punishable offences, 166 were boys. The increase in juvenile delinquency is due mainly to the early emancipation of the child from the home influences, and to the utter indifference of some parents as to the welfare of their children. At present the streets are the evening schools of many of our young people. The excitement and allurements of the streets and places of public entertainment are often sought in preference to the sordid or monotonous conditions in the home. The lack of comfort in the home, and the failure of the parents to hold the interest of the children, are all factors in accounting for the large number of children who come before the Courts every year. It is estimated that at least 75 per cent. of the boys referred to above were street traders prior to admission, while the passion for the picture-shows probably accounts for a large proportion of the remaining cases. Such public attention has been drawn by social workers, teachers, and others to the pernicious influence that casual trading in the streets, and too frequent attendance at picture-shows, has on the mental and physical condition of school-children that it is hoped the necessary legislation which has been prepared to meet this condition of affairs will be introduced and passed at the next session of Parliament.

*Appointment of Juvenile Probation Officers.*

In the Statute Law Amendment Act of last session provision was made for the appointment of Juvenile Probation Officers and for the establishment of probation homes. This enabled the Department to introduce a system providing for investigation by Juvenile Probation Officers in all cases of children charged with offences against the law, or coming within the meaning of the various Acts relating to children. In the majority of these cases the children who in the ordinary course would have been committed to industrial schools have been placed on probation either in their own homes or with friends or in situations. The percentage of successes is very great—nearly 97 per cent.—so that in the majority of cases not only is the reformation of the children proceeding satisfactorily in their own homes, but the cost of their maintenance in industrial schools has been saved.

*Result of Extension of the Probation System.*

The following figures show the number of children dealt with by the Courts in the four centres. In the case of Auckland the figures cover a period of nineteen months, but in the other centres a period of five months only : At Auckland 337 children appeared before the Court ; at Wellington, 24 ; at Christchurch, 59 ; at Dunedin, 20 : total, 440. Of these, 110 were committed to industrial schools, 32 were committed to industrial schools but placed on probation, and 137 were placed on temporary probation.

*Reduction in Numbers in Residence at Industrial Schools.*

As a result of an investigation regarding the conditions of the homes and the conduct of the resident inmates of each of the schools it was found possible to place out a considerable number either at board, with friends on probation, or in situations under supervision. Consequently the numbers in residence were reduced from 1,009 at the end of 1916 to 699 at the end of 1917, notwithstanding the fact that 358 children were committed to industrial schools during the year. As a result of this reduction it was possible to vary the function of the Auckland Industrial School from a residential school to that of a receiving-home or clearing-house.

*Reorganization of Boys' Schools.*

At the same time important changes were carried out in connection with the boys' schools. It was decided to reserve the training-farm at Nelson for boys of school age only, and the Training-farm at Weraroa for boys over school age. This change enabled the Department to close the day schools at Burnham and at the Training-farm, Weraroa, and by applying the system of boarding out direct from