

In the case of all feeble-minded persons living outside institutions, whether with relatives or otherwise, the State should, in the interest of both such feeble-minded individuals and of society, have the ultimate right of supervision.

The magnitude of the task to be undertaken cannot be estimated unless we have some indication of how numerous are those for whom special measures must be adopted. The information given below must not be too literally interpreted, but will serve to throw some light upon existing conditions in New Zealand.

SECTION 5.—ESTIMATES AS TO NUMBERS OF MENTAL DEFECTIVES.

In the absence of a complete system of notification, which the Committee consider is urgently necessary, any estimate as to the number of feeble-minded to be dealt with must be largely a matter of conjecture.

From the annual report of the Education Department, however, interesting information is available showing the ages of the pupils in the several classes of the primary schools. The following table is considered worthy of reprinting in this report, for from the figures it supplies some idea may be formed of the number of backward and feeble-minded children attending primary schools. Children of extremely low-grade mentality do not attend school as a rule, while feeble-minded children higher in the scale, discouraged by the unsuitable course of instruction and lack of sympathetic treatment, tend to leave school early. Hence the number of feeble-minded children in any community must be considerably larger than the school records indicate.

The following table shows the ages of pupils in the several classes of the primary schools. The numbers between the heavy horizontal lines represent those that, beginning school under six years of age spend an average of two years in the preparatory classes and one year in each of the standards. The numbers above the upper heavy lines have progressed at a greater rate than that indicated, and those below the lower lines have either begun school later or have progressed more slowly.

The most arresting feature in the table (p. 13) is the large number of children in classes lower than should be expected at their age. Thus the preparatory classes had 12,693 pupils over the age of eight years. This number is certainly a considerable reduction on the total for the previous year, but it still represents no less than 18 per cent. of the total roll of those classes. Particular attention is being directed to the problem of retardation, and in some of the larger centres special classes for retardates have been established.

It will also be seen that the actual number of children retarded three years or more, including the preparatory classes and up to Standard III—beyond which the higher grades of the feeble-minded do not progress as a rule—is 4,917 out of a total of 212,709 children attending school, or a trifle over 2 per cent. In some countries three years' retardation is regarded as *prima facie* evidence of mental deficiency. Probably New Zealand has much the same proportion of mental defectives as other countries. This is stated by Goddard to be between 2 and 3 per cent. of the population.

A recent survey made by the Education Department of the children attending the primary schools in a typical area disclosed the fact that out of a total school population of 16,499 no fewer than 950 pupils, constituting 5·7 per cent. of the total school enrolment, are retarded two years or more. Some of these may be classed as dull normal; some may be suffering from remediable physical defects; others may be merely the victims of unfavourable circumstances, while others again may be what Burt calls "late bloomers"—i.e., cases of slow development. Many of them, however, will ultimately prove to be mental defectives. Deficiency sometimes does not reveal itself definitely until the pre-adolescent period or early adolescence.

Of the total number on the school registers 266, or 1·6 per cent., are retarded three years or more. It is interesting to note from information supplied by Mr. N. R. McKenzie, Inspector of Schools, that this is exactly the percentage of defectives discovered in the schools of a section of the city of Toronto as the result of a psychological survey. It also corresponds with the number in the Vancouver city schools, where nineteen special classes are operating with a school population of 19,000—i.e., one class per 1,000 pupils.

For the purpose of this report a preliminary survey from information supplied by social workers, school-teachers, police, Hospital Boards, &c., has been made by the Education Department of what may be regarded as the obviously feeble-minded and epileptic cases known to exist outside institutions in the Dominion.

The following figures show the number of such cases reported, but these figures are incomplete—the actual number must be greater :—

Age.	At 24th June, 1924.			
	Feeble-minded.		Epileptic.	
	Male.	Female.	Male.	Female.
Under sixteen years	524	285	41	43
Over sixteen years	305	203	35	31
	829	488	76	74

Recapitulation.

Males	905
Females	562
	1,467