

The Committee visited and inspected both Otekaike and Richmond, and were very favourably impressed with the healthy environment and careful management of these institutions, and with the humane and sympathetic methods adopted for the purpose of making the best of imperfect human material.

At both places physical exercises, musical drill, and organized games form an important part of the training, and the teachers deserve commendation for the efficiency of the pupils in these respects and their general appearance of physical fitness.

Moral training and training in habits of personal cleanliness and prompt obedience form an important part of the curriculum, and the effects are noticeable in the quick movements and alert attitude of the inmates. The girls at Richmond receive training in domestic work, needlework, knitting, darning, &c., according to their ability.

The children are taught various kinds of handiwork, and by grouping them according to mental capacity they are given a school course modified to suit the individual. In the industrial division at Otekaike, baskets, sea-grass furniture, and all kinds of wickerware and coir mats are well made, and are readily sold. Bootmaking and repairing for the institution are also carried out by certain of the inmates under a practical man. Attached to Otekaike there is an area of land where farming, gardening, and fruitgrowing absorb most of the labour of the older inmates.

At Richmond the area of land available for cultivation is limited, but even so it occurred to the Committee that something more might possibly be done in the direction of providing congenial and profitable work for the older girls, as, for instance, the growing of flowers for sale in the Wellington markets.

At Otekaike, after training, the best types of the older inmates are placed out, usually with farmers in the district, and for the most part are leading useful lives under the supervision of the local Juvenile Probation Officers of the Education Department.

The matter of placing out girls from the school at Richmond is obviously one of much greater difficulty.

At both Otekaike and Richmond there is a growing group of custodial cases, due to the fact that in many instances the parents or guardians are either unable to provide proper protective measures for the children if released, or are unsuitable in other ways to have the control of them. On the other hand, there is reluctance on the part of medical practitioners to certify such cases for a mental hospital. It is very desirable, of course, that the special schools should be used as trying-out places for children whose mental equipment is questionable, but where after a reasonable trial it is evident that merely custodial care is required there should be some simple method of passing them on to farm colonies or suitable custodial homes.

As a matter of fact, the school at Richmond has its full complement of pupils, and as many cases have now to be refused admission it is urgently necessary that other provision should be made, especially for the older girls needing custodial care.

Mention should also be made of a visit paid by the Committee to the industrial school at Caversham, which deals with girls and young women who have failed to make good when placed out under supervision in the community. There is a small clothing-factory attached to the institution, which provides useful employment for certain of the better-type girls. It is stated that, even under present conditions, which are not altogether satisfactory, the majority of the Caversham girls benefit from the training they receive to such an extent that they can be trusted to earn their living in the community under supervision.

The Committee, however, are of opinion that the buildings and site are most unsuitable for such an institution. Little level space is available for recreation purposes, the property is overlooked at the back, and the location and general plan of the buildings are such that the utmost vigilance has to be exercised. For the inmates belonging to the reformatory section it is considered that such an institution should be situated in the country with sufficient suitable land to permit of gardening and farming on a small scale. This would afford healthful occupation for the inmates and contribute towards their support. Such an institution should be so situated as to be readily accessible from all parts of the Dominion.

In the matter of the admission of young offenders over sixteen years of age to the Caversham Industrial School, and also to the Boys' Training-farm at Weraroa, the Committee found that in these cases the Courts have no authority to commit direct, but must first sentence the young person to imprisonment and then recommend transfer to an industrial school. Such a system is not only cumbersome, but is fundamentally wrong, and should be remedied as soon as possible. The Courts should have discretionary powers to commit any young offender under eighteen years of age direct to an industrial school.

At Caversham there is a small proportion of the inmates who should be transferred to a Borstal institution. This refers to the so-called "over-sexed" girl, and the girl with strong anti-social proclivities, who should be confined to an institution where there is provision for segregation and treatment of refractory cases. In many instances these young women should be kept under control for a considerable period. Many are hopelessly immoral, and in the interests of society should not be allowed their liberty.

That section of the Caversham institution comprising children committed to the care of the State on account of destitution or unsuitable conditions in their homes would be better provided for in a separate receiving home. This would be in accord with the practice obtaining in all the other centres.

The Education Department deals with all children committed to the care of the State for causes varying from destitution to delinquency. The procedure is for the police to charge the children and for the Magistrate to commit them to the nearest receiving home, where they are kept under observation, trained in proper habits, and so forth, and as soon as possible, if they exhibit no anti-social traits,