

1926.
NEW ZEALAND.

EDUCATION :
CHILD WELFARE, STATE CARE OF CHILDREN, SPECIAL
SCHOOLS, AND INFANT-LIFE PROTECTION.

[In continuation of E.-4, 1925.]

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency

No. 1.—EXTRACT FROM THE FORTY-NINTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE
MINISTER OF EDUCATION.

CHILD WELFARE.

During last session the Child Welfare Act was passed by the Legislature. The Act provides for the creation of a special branch of the Education Department to be known as the Child Welfare Branch, and is designed to make better provision with respect to the maintenance, care, and control of children who are specially under the protection of the State, and to provide generally for the protection and training of indigent, neglected, or delinquent children.

An important section of the Act provides for the establishment of Children's Courts, to be presided over by Stipendiary Magistrates or Justices specially authorized to exercise jurisdiction in these Courts. Provision is made for the appointment of honorary associates of either sex, whose function it will be to consider all the facts concerning children brought before the Courts and to advise the presiding Magistrate or Justice as to what action should be taken. The appointment of Child Welfare Officers for the investigation of all cases coming before the Courts has also been provided for. The functions of such officers will be carried out mainly by the regular officers already employed by the Department, but in outlying districts it is hoped to utilize the services of voluntary social service agents for this important work.

The principle of dealing with children in the privacy of the Magistrate's room has been followed for many years past throughout the Dominion, and the Child Welfare Act was designed to give legality to such a practice. In addition, the Act gives very wide discretionary powers to the Magistrates of these special Courts in dealing with children. The ordinary procedure of requiring the child to plead, of taking evidence on oath, and, in fact, of hearing the particular charge may be dispensed with altogether. Wherever practicable the Children's Court is to be held in premises apart from the ordinary Police Court, and no newspaper is permitted to publish either the names of children appearing before these Courts or any particulars that are likely to identify the child.