

SYSTEM OF SUPERVISION.

The number of cases dealt with by the Children's Courts last year was 2,023, and of these 533 were placed under the supervision of the Child Welfare Officers or brought under the "Big Brother" scheme as carried out by the Y.M.C.A. and the Roman Catholic authorities. The number actually admitted to institutions such as receiving-homes, special schools, training-farm, &c., was 650, but all these, with the exception of 130 who require further training, were suitably provided for in the community before the close of the year. The remainder of the children appearing before the Courts were dealt with in a summary manner not calling for supervision by a Child Welfare Officer.

INSTITUTIONAL CARE.

For the training and detention of State wards who have proved by their anti-social behaviour somewhat of a problem to manage, either in their own homes or in foster-homes or places of employment, and for those higher-grade improvable feeble-minded cases who cannot be suitably adjusted in the community, provision is made in institutions established for the purpose.

The raising of the age of a "child" from sixteen to seventeen years (Child Welfare Amendment Act, 1927) has materially increased the number of young persons (particularly girls) appearing before the Children's Courts, and in consequence further institutional provision has been necessary for such of these cases requiring training and treatment and the staff of Child Welfare Officers has had to be increased.

INFANT-LIFE PROTECTION (INFANTS ACT, 1908).

Infants' Homes.—Under the provisions of Part V of the Infants Act, it is unlawful for any person to receive or retain in his care or charge any infant or any child under the age of six years for the purpose of maintaining it apart from its parents or guardians for a longer period than seven consecutive days, unless such person is licensed in accordance with this part of the Act. The duties in connection with the licensing and inspection of these homes, and the supervision of the children in such homes, are carried out by the officers of the Child Welfare Branch, who are all experienced nurses.

At the end of the year there were 1,007 children maintained in 797 licensed foster-homes. Of these, 655 homes had one child each, 93 had two children each, 36 had three children each, 10 had four children each, 1 home had five children, 1 had six children, and 1 had seven children. The payments by relatives for the maintenance of each child ranged from 5s. to £3 3s. a week, the average rate of payment being approximately 15s. 4d. per week.

Adoptions.—By an arrangement with the Department of Justice, all applications for adoptions are investigated by Child Welfare Officers before being dealt with by a Magistrate. During the year 371 children were adopted, and in 36 of these cases premiums were received by the Department's agents and paid out at the rate of 15s. a week for each child concerned. Of the total number of children adopted, 65 were under the age of six months, 37 between the age of six and twelve months, 168 between the age of one and five years, 52 between the age of five and ten years, and 49 between the age of ten and fifteen years.

INVESTIGATION OF ILLEGITIMATE BIRTHS.

The Child Welfare Act provides for the investigation and supervision, where necessary, of all infants born out of wedlock. During the year the number of cases investigated was 1,383, of which no less than 357 were placed in foster-homes licensed under the provisions of the Infants Act. A certain number of these infants (91), through the inability of the mothers to provide properly for them, were committed to the care of the branch and placed out in foster-homes, under the child-welfare system. The remainder of the cases were suitably provided for either by their own parents or by relatives, or by admission to private institutions, and in such a manner not calling for the intervention of the Department. In a great many of these cases the assistance given by the Child Welfare Officers has been the