

approval of the Minister in Charge, in terms of the Act, but generally speaking the Department's policy is to decentralize the work so far as may be possible. The officers are selected according to their ability to deal with children and social problems, and to co-operate effectively with officials, with parents, and with the public generally. With women, nursing and teaching experience, and with men, teaching or prior social service work, are regarded as essential qualifications. New appointees are trained in their more special duties by attaching them in the first instance to one or other of the larger centres under an experienced officer.

#### HONORARY CHILD WELFARE OFFICERS.

There are nearly 200 Honorary Child Welfare Officers, male and female, acting at the present time. These officers, who give their services gratuitously, have proved of considerable value to the Department in carrying out its work, and especially so in the smaller centres of population. This is in accordance with the Department's general policy of decentralization and the belief that it should be left as far as possible to the local people to deal with their own cases—the Department merely to guide or assist. In cases coming before the Children's Courts these officers as a rule make all the inquiry and report to and attend the Court themselves, unless there are special circumstances which might require the attention of the permanent official for the district. The Department takes this opportunity of again expressing to all these officers its deep appreciation of the services they perform to the Department in particular and to the youth of the community in general.

#### INSTITUTIONS.

It is the policy of the Department (section 19 of the Act) not to place any child in an institution unless this should become absolutely necessary. It is recognized, however, that there will always be a relatively small proportion of children dealt with who require institutional treatment before they can be returned to the community. For children requiring a more or less lengthy period of detention, the Department has two institutions—one for boys at Weraroa, near Levin, and one for girls at Burwood, near Christchurch. The ages of the young people admitted or in residence thereat vary from about fourteen to nineteen years. Boys remain in residence usually from six months to eighteen months, while girls remain sometimes up to two and three years before again being tried in the community. Each case is dealt with on its merits. The Department has in hand at present the matter of making better provision for boys requiring reformatory treatment, the existing institution at Weraroa being quite out of date for this purpose.

In addition to these two institutions there are smaller institutions—namely, a boys' home and a receiving-home in each of the four main centres, and one additional receiving-home at Hamilton. The former homes take in boys from nine years onwards who require temporary housing; such boys attend the nearest public school. Boys of school age are sometimes ordered by the Court to spend a period of one to six months in an institution, and these are usually provided for at such homes. They also provide for older boys requiring temporary accommodation while changing board or service situations, &c.

The receiving-homes are clearing-houses for young children of both sexes, and all girls. Older girls are admitted pending placement in a foster-home or a situation, while young girls just leaving school who require a short period of training in domestic work are also admitted before being placed out. In this connection it may be stated, however, that a number of mistresses prefer to take these young girls and train them themselves.

At both classes of homes children may be admitted on remand or on warrant (section 13 (2) of the Act) pending the hearing of the complaint in the Court.

The Department has also a Girls' Hostel in Wellington which accommodates about 16 girls. These girls are usually apprenticed to trades or employed in shops or in offices. This institution provides for those who are not well fitted for domestic work but, while likely to do well in other employment, would be better for a period of the friendly supervision exercised by the staff in the Hostel.

Backward children under the care of the Branch who cannot be educated at the special classes in the public schools, or, being over school age, require special training, are admitted to the two institutions established for such cases.

In dealing with its problem cases the Department desires to record its appreciation of the services rendered by Dr. J. Russell, the Deputy Director-General of Mental Hospitals, an experienced psychiatrist who has examined and reported upon a large number of children referred to him by the Branch and who has kept in close contact with the Department's residential institutions.

In the preventive field also his work is invaluable. Parents with problem children call upon or are referred to him for advice, the outcome of which is that frequently satisfactory adjustments in family and community relationships are made. His services have also been utilized to a large extent in connection with special investigations for the information of Children's Courts and examination of cases where any phase of instability or mental retardation in the child is considered to be a vital factor.

Annual reports from the principal institutions are appended to this report.

#### BOARDING-OUT OR PLACEMENT OF CHILDREN IN PRIVATE HOMES.

Section 20 of the Child Welfare Act of 1925 makes special mention of the fact that children are to be placed in foster-homes.

With over half a century of experience the Department can say unhesitatingly that this system of placement is the best for normal children who for one reason or another have no homes of their own. There is ample evidence to substantiate the beneficent results which as a general rule follow the boarding-out of children in private homes in the community. There are approximately 2,000 children constantly at board. Despite the care taken in selection and subsequent supervision, it is perhaps only to be expected that occasionally a home will be found to have deteriorated or to have become