

## To Manage 3YA



AS we go to press the appointment of J. F. Skedden (above) as Station Manager of 3YA is announced. Mr. Skedden, who has been programme organiser at 3YA since 1940 (and who before that was manager of Station 4YZ Invercargill) takes over the post made vacant by the death of John Mackenzie on July 3.

quite early in its life one child or more has fallen foul of its parents and the emotional misunderstanding has got worse and worse until they just don't get on at all together. So the parents become domineering or tearful and the child becomes defiant or repressed. If he's defiant he may keep the home in a constant uproar and dogfight. If he's repressed he may break out in other ways outside the home — pilfering or vandalism or something like that. Then the parents come to our psychologist in despair, or perhaps his teacher tells us the case. Sometimes an investigation will show where the emotional trouble lies and the family can make a comparatively fresh start with new attitudes to each other. But quite often the only thing possible is to put the youngster among altogether different people in a different district. Result—a different child.

"And how do you sort your cases out?"

"Well, suppose that a boy has been 'committed' to us—as the official word is. We take him to the Receiving Home, a sort of transit house that we have in each of the larger centres. And there we unobtrusively observe him for a week or two, or if need be, longer. If it becomes plain that he's mentally backward or similarly handicapped we send him on to one of our boarding schools for such children. There he'll learn at a pace suited to his ability and so later be launched on to a comparatively normal life. If, on the other hand, his mental and physical abilities are normal but he shows definitely 'delinquent' attitudes we send him to a Training School where he will get socially readjusted with fellows of his own age in the course of learning a trade and taking part in sport and general activities. But most often a child while in the Receiving Home shows no sign—or practically no sign—of the attitudes that brought him there. So

it's obvious that it was his human or material environment and not the child himself who was wrong. What these children need is a new home and the more ordinary and normal a home the better. That's where the foster-parent system comes in."

### Choosing Foster-Parents

"And how do you choose your foster-parents?"

"Sometimes people just apply to us, perhaps as a result of their knowing others who have gained satisfaction from their role of foster-parent." It was the second officer who answered now. "Or else we hear of likely people who might be glad to take a child, and approach them. Some are very 'choosey.' But others will give any youngster a go."

"For love—or do you pay them?"

"Both," he replied. "Some people simply like children, and will take a whole succession of boys, sometimes perhaps two or three at a time, who call them 'Mum' and 'Dad' and in later life, when they've gone off elsewhere to work, send them presents at Christmas time and write them letters, and—in fact—become practically adopted children. In other cases a woman, in the country perhaps, wants a playmate for her own youngster and applies to us. And in other cases still a desire to help the unfortunate seems to be dominant. But the State always pays, of course. The scale of boarding payments varies according to the age of the child, so I won't bother you trying to remember it. But it's adequate—including some pocket money — and we supply the original clothes as well."

### "Keeping in Touch"

"But what if they're unlucky and strike trouble with their youngster?"

"That happens sometimes," the third and hitherto most silent man spoke up. "Usually it's nothing more serious than getting used to new people and new ways. But it could be worse. So always we stress, when we're 'placing out' boys, that the foster-parents should make contact with us if they have any trouble at all. Otherwise we avoid putting ourselves conspicuously between foster-parent and child at any stage. Though of course we do have to visit them once in a while just to see how things are shaping — and much often if we are needed. Sometimes again, where there is a little friction, it means nothing more than that that home is the wrong one for that boy. We change him to another family—after consultation all round, of course—and everything runs smoothly."

"Having to change homes like that would practically never happen," one of the other officers added, "if we had a wider choice of homes. Practically every boy—or girl, for that matter, because our women officers look after girls as well—will do well in the home which suits him. I'm not distinguishing now between richer and poorer homes, because affection, not money, is the main thing children need. What I mean is that every home has its own atmosphere and we have found that one type suits one type of child while another suits another. There's a job to be done with these youngsters, and if you can tell *Listener* readers that we need many more people who will let us know that they would consider boarding suitable children, you will have done a big service all round."

I promised that I would.  
And I have.

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