

institutions where children live all the year round—except perhaps for summer camps—and the ordinary boarding school from which the children get several months' holiday during the year and where the delights of home are intensified. The institution child has no such advantage. He feels different. His life is monotonous. He lives in a group apart, separated in many ways from the main stream of life. I inquired of one old boy why so few of them were asked into the homes of their school-mates. He looked surprised and said, "Don't you know? We are socially inferior." It is horrible that any child should have cause to feel like that. Another point: children in large groups, especially with depleted staffs, cannot be given adequate help with homework. Some get behind and become discouraged, often with serious results to their chances in life.

I have seldom seen these children visited when in hospital. They watch other children enjoying visits from relations, people who belong; and the same applies to school sports—there is seldom anyone to be pleased when they win. Staff workers cannot be expected to attend to these extras, they are hard-pressed already and Committees give much time and thought to administration, but members of parishes might well take a hand in this lovely work. The children need personal friends, and homes to visit where they feel welcome. We should compensate them in every way possible. They should be well-dressed. This is very important. Some Committees realise this, others fail, and it is sometimes painfully easy to pick out "orphanage" children. Some, as they grow into adolescence, bitterly resent their lot, especially when they have many quite well-to-do relations. Their opinion of their particular Home is often very different from the general opinion, and it is what they think that matters. In one large modern institution, much admired by the public, the boys say, "It's just a Borstal," and I know girls attending High Schools who try and hide the fact that they live in an orphanage.

Staffing

Shortage of domestic workers is now a serious problem in institutions. The high wages, too, are a heavy drain on funds. Some Homes are struggling along with mere skeleton staffs. No praise is too high for the women who work in these places under such difficult and disheartening conditions. This shortage has another aspect; it means that the boys and girls have to do more and more of the essential work, which is most undesirable beyond a certain limit.

Even more serious is the lack of trained and qualified staffs. There should be general recognition that the care of these children is skilled work, just as in the case of teaching, nursing, or any other profession. The new School for Social Studies at Victoria College should prove of great value in this respect and provide a new vocation for women. In England things are moving fast, and already 160 picked women are being trained to become fully qualified House Mothers. America and Scandinavia have special colleges for social workers, and graduates go out into the field fully qualified for the work they have chosen. Great skill and understanding are needed in dealing with the behaviour problems so common among uprooted children, and unqualified people—with the best intentions—can

do grave harm. Common symptoms such as truancy, stealing, bedwetting, etc., are often punished and the cause unsuspected. I know of two Homes, and there may be others, where tables are set apart in the dining room for the luckless enuretics, and they have to endure punishment and humiliation for acts over which they have no control whatever. Needless to say the number of chronic bedwetters in such Homes is high.

Children are caned, too, for lying and stealing. The Curtis Report has some pertinent things to say on this subject. "We have come to the conclusion that corporal punishment (i.e., caning and birching) should be definitely prohibited in children's Homes for children of all ages and both sexes. We think the time has come when such treatment should be considered unthinkable. It should be remembered that the children with whom we are concerned are already at a disadvantage in society. Whatever may be said of this form of punishment in the case of boys with a happy home and full confidence in life, it may be disastrous for the child with the unhappy background."

It is admitted that orphanages and institutions to-day provide infinitely better housing for children than was the case once. But we have outlived those conditions and large institutions no longer fit into our social pattern. More normal homes would produce more normal children. I remember attending a large public meeting in New Zealand more than 40 years ago when an overwhelming vote was passed in favour of small cottage Homes. Yet thousands of pounds are still being spent on large institutional buildings.

What hinders progress? Lack of imagination and lack of vision with complacency on the one hand and apathy on the other. There is little personal interest taken in homeless children in this country.

The fundamental needs of every child can be summed up in a few words: adequate affection and security, and the opportunity to develop full confidence in life.

If these are to be our aims, I fear the goal is still over the hills and far, far away.

NATIONAL FILM UNIT

THE National Film Unit's Weekly Review No. 363, to be released on August 20, has the following items:—"Arbor Day" in Wellington; "J Force Stands Down"—New Zealanders' last days in Japan; "Tractor Demonstration," showing the latest in tractors for the farmer; "Flying Boat's Last Trip" (having served its usefulness in the air, the flying boat Aotearoa will have a land job as a tea-room); and "Maoris v. Fiji," showing the Maoris and Fijians in a Rugby test match played at Fiji.

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