

again begin to *feel* for themselves what it is like to be part of a community."

We asked Mr. Peek if his methods ever failed.

"I think it's wrong to create the impression that sweet reasonableness always prevails," he replied. "There are always some individuals who don't respond and sometimes it is necessary for the good of the whole to use methods that could be described as negative." These may range from deprivation of privileges to "six-of-the-best." Nowadays the tougher and more vicious type of boy does not enter Levin but goes instead to Borstal.

"One thing I haven't mentioned and it's the most important of all," said Mr. Peek. "This is the effect the men and women of the staff have on the boys. If a boy likes a man, he respects him, emulates him and won't want to let him down. This isn't necessarily restricted to key persons like the manager and the matron but any member of the staff can have this effect on him. If you meet a lad years afterwards you find he doesn't talk about the things he did at Levin but about the people. This to me is the real measure of the effectiveness of the institution."

This theme of personal influence was to recur when we later returned to discuss different types of problems.

"Throughout all our work we are dealing with human relationships," said an Officer, "so we can never over-simplify no matter how tempting it may be. The trouble is that people get so used to thinking that one thing may be the cause of the trouble, that if we change this or alter that, then everything will be fine. But it just doesn't work that way. Most of our work is slow, patient and undramatic. But sometimes miracles do happen. Something clicks and then there's no doubt about it being dramatic. You may have a disturbed child who goes through several foster-homes then suddenly he finds the person who is right for him. When that happens it is like a miracle."

"Unfortunately for some of the children this never happens. Here is the case of a seriously disturbed and delinquent boy, whose home from any point of view seems an excellent one. After a series of thefts he came under our guardianship. He was seen by a psychologist and reported as being a serious personality problem. When he was 13 he was sent to Levin, where he still is. The verdict on his case is "baffling," but there is to me at least, one hopeful sign, he is enthusiastic about art, though this in itself may not be enough to save him."

A dark undertone to the work of the Division, much of which is concerned with severe suffering that might have been avoided, is the small group of people to whom no help can be given. This group forms what society calls "criminals" and the psychiatrist, calls "psychopaths." Although many of the people in this group may never have passed through the hands of the Child Welfare Division, their problems are only the magnification of problems which the Division is gradually learning to solve.

"These are the people who can't keep a job, who are immovable in human relationships, whose personalities are such that we can make no contact with them. We are unable to help them because we don't know enough about their human problems. If they go to prison, as



*"MANY girls at Burwood show such aggression that it is over a year before their problems can be unravelled." Sport and congenial work help to re-educate them in normal living*

many of them do, they are unhappy in prison.

There has been no space to describe Burwood and the work being done there by Miss K. Scotter, the present Principal. Boys tend to express difficulties through violence, girls on the other hand, tend to take it out on themselves. "Their crime is mainly against themselves," says Miss Scotter. "At Burwood the staff might not always approve of what the girl does but they always approve of her—they're on her side. We try to help the girl to understand the reason for her own anti-social behaviour." At Burwood many girls show such aggression that it is over a year before their problems can be unravelled and rebuilding can start. Often they are consumed with hatred of the Child Welfare Division, of themselves and of their family.

Nor has any mention been made of Otekaike in North Otago, where boys of low intelligence, including delinquent boys, go—or of its sister institution at Richmond in Nelson. Nor of another type of home, the "family-home" which is being developed to bring about the permanent cure of difficult children who do not need long-term care. These are special homes able to take from eight to ten children, and by the end of this year there will be four throughout New Zealand.

A form of treatment for seriously disturbed children and one which has been extensively tried overseas is that of providing facilities where the children can have complete and utter freedom. In Sweden, where social problems are much worse than they are in New Zealand,



they have found that complete freedom is the best way of dealing with this type of child. To be effective it requires people who will not be upset by the child's behaviour and who will accept the child as he is. A first experiment in this type of work was recently carried out at Glenelg Health Camp in Canterbury. A group of unhappy and disturbed children attended for two to three months. Many of these children had had restrictions placed on them all their lives which had only aggravated their condition. They now had a chance to build up their mental and emotional health, before passing on to other forms of treatment. Medical observers were very impressed with the results achieved in this comparatively short time.

With knowledge and treatment of delinquent children in its present stage of development, there may still be too many unanswered questions and too many failures for our comfort. These, however, must be balanced by the preponderant success which attends most of the Division's efforts. On their part they ask that their work be regarded with understanding, which in turn will yield them the necessary freedom to try new methods, and where necessary experiment freely.

(A documentary programme on the work of the Child Welfare Division will be heard in the Main National programme this coming Sunday, September 30, at 9.30 a.m.—not 9.30 p.m. as stated in the last issue.)