

1941.
NEW ZEALAND.

EDUCATION:
CHILD WELFARE, STATE CARE OF CHILDREN, SPECIAL
SCHOOLS, AND INFANT-LIFE PROTECTION.

[In continuation of E-4, 1940.]

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE		PAGE
No. 1.—Report of the Superintendent—		No. 1.—Report of the Superintendent— <i>continued</i> —	
Placement of Children	2	Maori Children	4
Educational Facilities	2	Preventive Work	4
Edward Costley Trust	2	British Children	4
Young Persons in Employment	2	No. 2.—Tables relating to Child Welfare—	
Children's Courts	2	1. Children under Control and Supervision	5
Admissions to Borstal	3	2. Cases classified according to Reasons for Appearance	5
Infant-life Protection	3	3. Children placed under Supervision of Child Welfare Officers	5
Illegitimate Children	3	4. Status of Children	6
Adoptions	3	5. Committals and Admissions during the Year	6
Registered Children's Homes	3	6. Expenditure on Child Welfare	7
Discharge of Inmates	3		
Special Residential Schools	3		

REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT, CHILD WELFARE BRANCH.

SIR,—

I have the honour to present my report on the work of the Child Welfare Branch of the Education Department for the year ended 31st March, 1941.

Lack of space forbids a detailed statement of the functions and activities of this Branch; fuller information is contained in previous reports.

Considerable improvements carried out at the various receiving-homes, boys' homes, and hostels during the year resulted in better conditions and facilities for both the staff and the children in residence.

The new Training Centre for older boys at Levin to replace the old Training Farm, Weraroa, has been completed, and the boys will be admitted within the next few weeks. The staff has been reorganized, and a well-defined programme for the training and education of the boys has been laid down.

The Receiving-home at Napier was reopened during the year to provide for the temporary care of children from the Hawke's Bay - Gisborne districts and to relieve the congestion at the Receiving-home, Wellington.

During the year the Department lost the services of a number of the staff, male and female, through resignations and on account of military duties. Unfortunately, many of our officers were already carrying an overload of case work, but an endeavour is being made, by the appointment of temporary officers, to keep the work up to an efficient standard. Proposals in hand for the improved reorganization of the district child-welfare offices provide for additional staff training and fuller co-operation with other agencies interested in the welfare of children.

PLACEMENT IN THE COMMUNITY OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PERSONS.

There was a considerable falling off during the year in the number of applications from foster-parents willing to take State wards into their homes, and this entailed more intensive work on the part of the field staff in the placement of the younger children in our care. It may be mentioned in this connection that only a very small percentage of children are placed in institutions even for brief periods. For the normal child, placement in a good foster-home is regarded as the next best thing to having a home and parents of its own.

For those requiring institutional care the Department has its own institutions in the main centres, and advantage is also taken in certain cases of placing children in the children's homes controlled by private organizations. There were 105 children in residence at these latter homes at the 31st March last and 77 in the four Roman Catholic institutions specifically mentioned in the Child Welfare Act, 1925.

A feature in the placement of younger children was the increase in the boarding of difficult children in specially-selected foster-homes rather than in institutions. Some foster-parents are specially adapted to train this type of child, and the good results attained warrant the continuance of this practice. It means more trained staff, of course, as considerable time must be spent in the study of the individual child in order to ensure placement in the home atmosphere conducive to the fullest adjustment.

EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES.

State wards are in the same position as other children so far as facilities for education are concerned, and deserving cases are given considerable assistance throughout their post-primary course. At the 31st March, 1941, 223 of the 2,046 children in foster-homes were receiving post-primary education, of these, 53 were taking professional courses, 100 technical, 36 commercial, and 23 home science, while 11 Maori children were attending Maori colleges.

EDWARD COSTLEY TRUST.

In connection with the above I wish to make grateful acknowledgment of the assistance given in Auckland to deserving children who desire to proceed with post-primary and higher education, and to apprentices and others requiring help. In each case a recommendation by our local Senior Boys' Welfare Officer is required by the trustees. An average of 50 cases are so assisted every year.

YOUNG PERSONS IN EMPLOYMENT.

When children are ready to be placed in employment, care is taken to consider their desires and special aptitudes. If in the initial stage of their employment they are not receiving sufficient wages to maintain themselves, the Department helps them financially—271 cases were being so assisted at the 31st March.

A Post Office Savings-bank account is opened in his own name for every child and a certain portion of his earnings is banked for his use later on. Generally speaking, the children receive the standard rate of wages.

At the 31st March 775 boys and 430 girls were in employment, and in addition 586 boys and 356 girls, not committed to the Department's care, were supervised in their situations by Child Welfare Officers.

CHILDREN'S COURTS.

The number of children appearing before the Children's Courts showed a slight decrease from last year—2,934, as against 2,953 the previous year.

The offences against rights of property show an increase, but this is offset by the decrease in the number of children charged simply as being "delinquent."

Of the children appearing before the Courts, 548 were committed to my care, this being an increase of 39 over last year; 862 were placed under the legal supervision of Child Welfare Officers, an increase of 64 over last year. The number committed to Borstal institutions was 40, as against 24 last year.

At the 31st March last the total number of children being supervised by orders of the Courts was 1,109. Of the 862 children placed under supervision this year, 72 had previously been dealt with by the Courts and placed under supervision, while the Courts ordered 9 to spend a period in an institution—usually three months, but sometimes longer. The majority of the children under supervision responded very well, but the deciding factor is the co-operation of the parents.

Honorary Child Welfare Officers numbering some 200 men and women throughout the Dominion assisted materially in the Court and inquiry work and in helping to supervise cases. Their services are highly appreciated. I also desire to acknowledge gratefully the services rendered by "Big Brothers" under the Y.M.C.A. and the Catholic Church authorities in helping to supervise boys.

As was the case last year, the majority of the 2,934 children appearing before the Courts were between the ages of ten and seventeen years, and 358 of the 641 taken charge of by the Superintendent during the year came within this age-group, as against 322 of the 596 committed to his care in 1940.

The district Child Welfare Officers submit to the presiding Magistrates concerned a special report each year covering the work of the Children's Courts for the year.

ADMISSIONS TO BORSTAL INSTITUTIONS.

During the year 3 boys and 1 girl were transferred to Borstal institutions. This action was taken only after all other means at our disposal had been availed of, and I was convinced that such action was necessary in their interests as well as in the interests of our institutions of which they were inmates.

In this connection, however, I wish to say that, on the other hand, we have been enabled to save many young people from being admitted to Borstal or other institutions. I am satisfied that with intensive methods of preventive work, including the proper placement of difficult children, we could do still more in the way of saving children from being sent to institutions. As an instance of this it may be mentioned that when the old Training-farm at Weraroa was handed over to the military authorities and provision had to be made hurriedly for a number of the boys in residence, we arranged for twenty-six of those whose training had only been partially completed to be placed in a district under the control of an officer fully qualified to deal with such cases. He visited the boys at frequent intervals during the first few months, and it is gratifying to be able to state that every one of them made good in the community. It was not found necessary to return any of these to institutions.

One boy who was regarded as a menace in his district and considered a suitable case for Borstal, but was ineligible on account of his age, was, by arrangement with the Court, taken charge of by this Branch and is progressing very satisfactorily under firm but sympathetic guidance.

INFANT-LIFE PROTECTION.

Children under the age of six years maintained in foster-homes apart from their parents are supervised by Child Welfare Officers. The homes are required to be registered, and are inspected regularly in the interests of the infants concerned. The total number of registered homes at the 31st March was 534, and the number of infants maintained therein was 581.

Payment for these children is made by the relatives concerned, but the agreement for payment must have the approval of the Superintendent or other authorized officer.

During the year Child Welfare Officers in certain districts were requested by the Courts under the Domestic Proceedings Act, 1939, to act as conciliators in 37 cases. In addition, Magistrates or Judges asked for reports in 10 cases of matrimonial disputes in which the custody of children was concerned.

District Child Welfare Officers also supplied to the Social Security Department reports on 186 families where the welfare of the children concerned required this action.

ILLEGITIMATE CHILDREN.

During the year the Department made the usual confidential inquiries with respect to all illegitimate births, which are notified to the duly-appointed Child Welfare Officer in each district. In the majority of cases it was found that suitable provision had been made for the child by the mother or other relatives, so that no further action was necessary on our part. In other cases the field officers assisted the mother in ensuring that suitable provision was made for the infant and for the mother herself. In certain cases the mothers were assisted to initiate affiliation proceedings.

ADOPTIONS.

A pleasing feature of the work in connection with children was the increase in the number of applications under the Infants Act for the adoption of children. The total number of adoption orders made by Magistrates for the year ended 31st December, 1940, was 604—the number for the previous year was 518.

The majority of the children adopted were infants up to the age of five years—408 out of the 604.

In 29 cases advantage was taken of the extended provisions of the Act of 1939 making eligible the adoption of children up to the age of twenty-one years.

CHILDREN'S HOMES REGISTERED UNDER THE CHILD WELFARE ACT, 1925.

There are 84 of these Homes, and the total number of children in residence at the 31st December, 1940, was 2,854, as against 2,973 the previous year. It is reported by the authorities that in the case of 158 of these children both parents were deceased, in the case of 592 the mother was deceased, and in the case of 254 the father was deceased. The information regarding the rest is indefinite, but it is known that in a number of cases the parents were separated or deserters, while in others nothing was known of their whereabouts.

DISCHARGE OF INMATES.

During the year 548 children were discharged, the average age of discharge being sixteen years three months. The policy is to discharge children as soon as they are suitably provided for by friends or relatives, or are able to fend for themselves.

SPECIAL RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS.

School for the Deaf, Sumner.—The number of pupils at the School for the Deaf at Sumner at the 31st March was 56 boys and 46 girls. In addition, 15 day pupils were attending the school—11 boys and 4 girls.

During the year Mr. T. Chambers, the Principal, retired on superannuation, and Mr. H. Pickering was appointed in his place.

Otekaike and Richmond.—The number of pupils at these special residential schools for backward children was: Otekaike (boys), 171; and Richmond (girls), 65.

Blind Children.—Blind children are provided for at the New Zealand Institute for the Blind at Auckland, a private institution with Government representation on the Board of Trustees. Parents may arrange admission privately and the Government may also arrange admissions. There were 24 Government pupils in residence at the 31st March.

MAORI CHILDREN.

During the year a considerable number of Maori children appeared before the Courts charged with offences, and the taking of further steps to cope with this problem is at present under review.

PREVENTIVE WORK.

I wish to repeat that I look upon the preventive side of our work as of first importance. It is proposed to take steps in the near future to increase our efforts in this connection. This means additional trained staff. It is intended to make still closer contact with all other organizations and services concerned with the welfare of children. We wish to make contact with the parents at an earlier stage than at present. We aim at organizing our services so that, wherever possible, action may be taken regarding a child before the necessity arises for him or her to be brought before a Court for having committed some offence. It is proposed to hold a conference of Child Welfare Officers in the near future, and this subject, together with that of improved methods of placement of children, will be among the topics for discussion.

BRITISH CHILDREN.

Under the scheme approved by the Governments of the United Kingdom and New Zealand, a total of 202 British children were, owing to war conditions, sent to this Dominion last year. A central body known as the British Children's Reception Committee was set up in Wellington by the Government, and preliminary arrangements were undertaken by the Internal Affairs and Education Departments. For convenience New Zealand was divided into twenty-eight zones. Applications were invited from persons willing to take children. There was a most generous response, many thousands of applications being received. Each zone had a responsible central authority with sub-centres throughout its area. Committees, including the Child Welfare Officers of the Education Department, were set up to consider applications. Later the allocation of the children to homes was dealt with by executive officers of the zone Committee in co-operation with the district Child Welfare Officers.

The various religious organizations generously offered to help and also to provide free temporary accommodation for the children in their institutions prior to their being allocated to their new homes. These offers were gratefully accepted by the Government, and this arrangement proved to be a valuable part of the general scheme.

Emergency regulations were passed by the New Zealand Government under which the guardianship of the children while in the Dominion was vested in the Superintendent of the Child Welfare Branch of the Education Department, who was thus placed *in loco parentis* and assumed control as soon as the children arrived in New Zealand. The first party of 89 children came from Scottish homes—31 nominated to reside with relatives or friends, and 58 "unspecified" or, in other words, homes had to be provided for them in New Zealand. The second party of English children (113) comprised 67 "nominated" and 56 "unspecified." In both instances the parties landed in Wellington and were placed in various private homes throughout the Dominion. At this time it was not known how many children would be likely to arrive, and later on advice was received from Great Britain that the scheme had to be dropped for the time being.

The children at the 31st March, 1941, were placed in the following districts: Wellington, 56; Auckland, 47; Canterbury, 29; Otago, 15; Manawatu, 13; Wairarapa, 12; Waikato, 10; Taranaki, 5; Gisborne, 4; Whangarei, 3; Nelson, 3; Timaru, 2; West Coast, 2; Wanganui, 1.

Since their arrival in New Zealand the children have settled down very well in their homes and have adapted themselves quickly to their new conditions. The health of the children has been very good on the whole and most of them have put on weight above the average. The Health Department co-operates in all matters affecting the health of the children. I desire to express grateful acknowledgment of the gratuitous services rendered where required to certain of the children by members of the British Medical Association and of the New Zealand Dental Association. The Child Welfare Officers visit the foster-homes regularly, and their reports indicate that the children are happy in their new homes. A certain number of adjustments were necessary, and transfers to other homes were arranged. The executive officers of the zone Committees have been most helpful in assisting to select new foster-homes in such cases. In a few cases the children subsequent to arrival showed the effects of nervous strain, but under sympathetic treatment in suitable home conditions their adjustment did not present any unusual difficulties.

The teachers of both primary and post-primary schools are most helpful with the children; their reports indicate almost without exception a good standard of education and quick adaptation to their school surroundings and new environment. At the 31st March 70 of the children were attending post-primary schools—a few who left school had taken up approved positions. Thanks to the understanding co-operation of the foster-parent, the scheme has worked very smoothly indeed. The children themselves are, in general, fine healthy types, and their conduct has been excellent.

Shortly after the arrival of the children, Mr. Cyril Bavin, O.B.E., was appointed as the representative in New Zealand of the Children's Overseas Reception Board, London. I desire to express my keen appreciation of the valuable services that, with his practical knowledge of the problems involved, he was enabled to render in all matters of major importance affecting our young visitors.

I have, etc.,
J. R. McCLEUNE, Superintendent.
The Director of Education, Wellington.

STATISTICAL TABLES.

TABLE 1.—NUMBER OF CHILDREN UNDER CONTROL AND SUPERVISION.

The total number of children under the supervision of the Child Welfare Branch as at the 31st March, 1941, was 8,106, classified under following headings:—

State wards—		
In foster-homes, hostels, and with friends	2,559	
In situations (includes 24 absent without leave)	986	
In Government institutions, receiving-homes, &c.	229	
In private institutions	105	
In Roman Catholic institutions recognized under the Child Welfare Act..	77	
In special schools for backward children	236	
In refuges or cognate institutions	51	
In hospitals, convalescent homes, &c.	30	
In residential colleges (mostly Maori children)	14	
	4,287	
Other than State wards—		
Young persons supervised by Child Welfare Officers in their own homes, with relatives, or with friends, pursuant to orders of Courts	1,109	
Infants supervised in foster-homes registered under the Infants Act	581	
Pupils at the School for the Deaf, Sumner	117	
Pupils at schools for mentally backward: Otekaikē and Richmond (other than State wards (236) included in figures above)	47	
Children supervised as preventive cases	1,739	
Children in New Zealand Institute for Blind for whom the Department makes payment	24	
	3,617	
British children	202	
Total	8,106	

TABLE 2.—TOTAL NUMBER OF CHILDREN APPEARING BEFORE CHILDREN'S COURTS.

(Classified according to reason for appearance.)

	1939-40.	1940-41.		1939-40.	1940-41.
Offences against morality	4	9	Breaches of special Acts— <i>continued.</i>		
Offences against the person	90	81	Motor-vehicles	13	6
Offences against rights of property	1,388	1,546*	Railways	2	40
Motor offences not involving rights of property	199	49	Fire brigades	10	4
Delinquent	201	66	Acclimatization	4	9
Indigent	161	208	Licensing	7	23
Not under proper control	206	175	Arms	38	43
Living in a detrimental environment	91	97	Post and Telegraph	67	68
Neglected	31	30	Traffic regulations	47	173
Breaches of special Acts—			Shipping	4	..
Police offences (minor)	86	215	Breaches of city by-laws	297	82
Child Welfare	7	10	Totals	2,953	2,934

* Including 133 cases of conversion of motor-vehicles, as against 117 last year; and theft, 1,121, as against 1,049 last year.

TABLE 3.—TOTAL NUMBER OF CHILDREN PLACED UNDER SUPERVISION OF CHILD WELFARE OFFICERS BY COURTS DURING THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH, 1941 (SECTION 13 (4)).

(Classified according to reason for appearance).

	Boys.	Girls.	Totals.
Charged with an offence	612	44	656
Delinquent	92	12	104
Not under proper control	46	26	72
In detrimental environment	6	9	15
Indigent	1	2	3
Neglected	6	6	12
Totals	763	99	862

TABLE 4.—STATUS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PERSONS UNDER GUARDIANSHIP OF THE SUPERINTENDENT AS AT THE 31ST MARCH, 1941.

Status.	Boys.	Girls.	Totals.
In residence at Government institutions	102	127	229
Boarded out in foster-homes	1,184	862	2,046
At service (includes 2 boys and 17 girls at day service)	629	334	963
With relatives or friends	297	190	487
In hospitals, convalescent homes, &c.	11	19	30
In refuges and cognate institutions	51	51
In Children's Homes registered under Part I, Child Welfare Amendment Act, 1927	63	42	105
Absent without leave (since returned except 2)	16	8	24
In colleges and residential schools	4	10	14
In Girls' Hostel, Wellington	17	17
In Boys' Hostel, Auckland	8	..	8
In residence at private institutions (Roman Catholic) ..	32	45	77
In schools for mentally backward	171	65	236
Totals	2,517	1,770	4,287

TABLE 5.—COMMITTALS AND ADMISSIONS (CLASSIFIED ACCORDING TO REASON FOR SUCH).

	Boys.	Girls.	Totals.
Committed by Courts—			
Indigent	90	78	168
Not under proper control	57	56	113
Delinquent	25	12	37
Accused or guilty of punishable offences	118	20	138
Living in a detrimental environment	30	29	59
Neglected	15	18	33
Supervision with residence	5	4	9
Admissions—			
Temporary arrangement	9	4	13
Private arrangement (section 12, Child Welfare Act, 1925)	10	7	17
Held on warrant pending decision of Court (section 13 (2), Child Welfare Act, 1925)	34	20	54
Totals	393	248	641

NOTE.—If the 641 children are classified according to their ages at the time custody was assumed, there are found to be 85 under six months, 14 over six months and under one year, 90 from one to five years, 94 from five to ten years, 149 from ten to fourteen years, and 209 over fourteen years.

TABLE 6.—EXPENDITURE ON CHILD WELFARE.

	£
Net expenditure on upkeep of child-welfare institutions	21,436
Salaries of staffs of Homes and Child Welfare Officers	47,459
Boarding-out of children—	£
Payments to foster-parents	83,436
Payments to Post and Telegraph Department as commission	539
Issues of clothing, &c.—	£
From institutions	384
From central and branch stores	2,980
	————— 3,364
Medicine, medical attendance, dentistry, clothing, &c.	7,004
	————— 94,343
Inmates at service—	
Issues of clothing, &c.—	
From institutions	730
From central and branch stores	577
	————— 1,307
Miscellaneous payments (clothing, medicine, &c.)	5,435
	————— 6,742
Refund of maintenance payments	183
Refund of inmates' earnings	223
Rent, office requisites, postage, &c.	6,866
Maintenance of inmates in private institutions	6,063
Travelling and removal expenses (including transit of children)	8,365
Wages of inmates	531
Legal expenses	62
Sundry expenses	41
Accidents	56
	————— 192,370
Less recoveries—	£
Board of staff and others	3,124
Parents and others	18,658
Sale of farm-produce	2,134
Inmates' earnings for clothing, &c.	6,507
Miscellaneous	810
	————— 31,233
	————— £161,137

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