

As a rule, the applications to adopt infant girls predominate. The figures for last year, however, show that 533 girls and 532 boys were adopted. This is probably explained by the numbers and sex of children available for adoption.

On the 1,056 cases where full details are to hand, 903 children (464 boys and 439 girls) were illegitimate.

#### REGISTERED CHILDREN'S HOMES

Eighty-two children's homes are conducted by private organizations registered under the provisions of the Child Welfare Amendment Act, 1927. These homes are subject to inspection by officers of the Child Welfare Branch. At the end of last year there were, according to their returns, a total of 2,790 children in residence, as against 2,928 the previous year.

It was reported that in the case of 153 children both parents were deceased, in 242 cases the fathers were deceased, and in 550 cases the mothers were deceased. It is understood that in many other cases the parents were separated or were missing.

In some of the homes necessary improvements to buildings have been held over owing to war conditions. The authorities are, however, fully alive to the position and intend to proceed as soon as circumstances permit. Officers of the Health Department gave valuable assistance in many cases with recommendations regarding dietary and other matters affecting the health and general welfare of the children.

#### TEMPORARY CARE OF CHILDREN

During the year certain private organizations continued their most useful service to the community by providing facilities for the more or less temporary care of children whose mothers were at work during the day or in hospital.

#### ILLEGITIMATE BIRTHS

All illegitimate births are notified confidentially to certain officers of the Child Welfare Branch, and it is their duty to inquire into each case with a view to ensuring that the infant and its mother are suitably provided for. Often no further action is required beyond this initial inquiry, since in the majority of the cases either the mother or other relatives make suitable arrangements.

An endeavour is made to keep the child and its mother together or to have the infant so placed that the mother can continue her interest in her baby. In only a small proportion of the cases is it necessary for the infant to be committed to the care of the State. A large number of illegitimate children are adopted.

During the year ended 31st March a total of 1,767 illegitimate births were notified to the Child Welfare Officers. Of these infants, 820 were residing with their mothers and 42 with other relatives, 62 were committed to the care of the State, 280 were in registered foster-homes or nursing homes, and 356 were adopted. In a number of cases inquiries were not completed or the child died.

During the last year there was a considerable increase in the number of illegitimate births as recorded by the Registrar-General over the period 1st January to 31st December, 1944—2,020 for 1944, as against 1,467 for 1943. The difference between our total and that supplied by the Registrar-General—1,767, as against 2,020—is no doubt due in part to the different periods represented and also perhaps to the time lag between recording and notification. It is a matter for concern to the whole community that there should be this increase. I have referred elsewhere to the increased work which fell upon this Branch arising out of war conditions. There seems no doubt that to these conditions can be ascribed the major part of the increase in the illegitimacy rate.

#### EDWARD COSTLEY TRUST, AUCKLAND

During the year the trustees financially assisted 71 children in the Auckland District with educational courses, apprenticeships, &c. This assistance took the form of grants for books, school uniforms, fees, travelling expenses, and clothing, and was granted upon favourable recommendations being received from the District Child Welfare Officer, who makes careful inquiry into each application. The majority of the children helped were fatherless or the parents were not in a position at the time to provide the necessary help.

The assistance given was highly appreciated by the parents and the children themselves, and is looked upon by this Department as a most valuable adjunct to child welfare service in the community.

#### SPECIAL SCHOOLS

*Schools for Backward Children.*—At the Special School for Boys at Otekaike, near Oamaru, there were 122 inmates in residence at 31st March, 92 of whom were in the day-school section and 30 in the industrial section. There were 35 new pupils admitted during the year and 25 left the institution. Of these, 21 returned to ordinary life in the community and 4 were found to be unsuitable for special-school training.

Owing to the impossibility of securing domestic staff, one of the cottages remained closed during the year and the Department was thereby unable to arrange for the admission of a number of approved cases.

The Manager reports that, despite shortages of staff, the training and recreational activities have proceeded much as usual.

At the Special School for Girls at Richmond, near Nelson, there were 63 girls in residence at 31st March. During the year 18 new pupils were admitted and 19 left. Of these, 5 older girls were placed in employment, 7 pupils were returned to their relatives, and 7 were transferred to other institutions.