

Both of these special schools provide for those children who for various reasons cannot be catered for at special classes attached to public schools. A full programme of educational and recreational activities is provided for the inmates of each school. The health of the children was good.

Schools for the Deaf.—There are two residential schools—one at Sumner, near Christchurch, and one at Titirangi, near Auckland.

The latter school was opened during the war period in temporary premises which were the most suitable of those available at the time. It is hoped that the erection of a new school to make better provision for these children will be proceeded with in the near future.

The roll numbers at these schools have risen considerably during the last year or so, 215 being on the rolls at 31st March, 1945, as against 175 in March, 1944. There were 53 new admissions during last year, 11 pupils left, and 2 died. Of the 215 pupils, 118 are boys and 97 girls. Of the 53 new admissions, 44 were congenitally deaf. The average age on admission was 5.57 years.

During the year 6 students were selected for the specialist course at the Auckland Teachers' Training College in education of the deaf.

The Principal reports that the health of the children at both schools was fairly satisfactory, although at the Auckland school minor ailments had occurred rather more frequently than is usual.

Blind Children.—Blind children in New Zealand are provided for at the New Zealand Institute for the Blind, situated at Auckland. It is administered by a Board of Trustees on which the Government is represented. Certain children not admitted by private arrangement are admitted as Government pupils. At 31st March there were 20 such pupils in residence. This institution, besides providing for the residential care and instruction of younger children, also provides a training programme for adults.

CHILDREN'S COURTS

When the Child Welfare Act, 1925, was passed in New Zealand, the Department had already in its Child Welfare Branch an organization for carrying on its welfare work, including that involved by the establishment of special Courts. The establishment of Children's Courts in New Zealand was an important progressive step in dealing with juvenile offenders and other children in need of care by the State. At the same time, the Children's Court system is not looked upon as other than one of the means of coping with the many problems of child welfare. I am convinced that the ideal should be concentration on the "preventive" side of the work.

The Courts continued to use the power to place certain children under the supervision of Child Welfare Officers for periods usually of one or two years. The number of such orders last year was 855, and this method of dealing with cases continues to produce satisfactory results.

(1) *Total Appearances.*—Table 2 shows a substantial decrease of 547 in the total number of appearances of children before the Courts for the year ended 31st March, 1945—2,529, as against 3,076 last year, representing a reduction of approximately 18 per cent.

(2) *Analysis of Total Appearances.*—(a) Complaints under the Child Welfare Act: Children appearing under this section were indigent, not under proper control, living in a detrimental environment, or neglected. There were 517 cases, as against 583 for the previous year. This represents a reduction of approximately 11 per cent. compared with 1943-44 figure, and a reduction of approximately 17 per cent. compared with 1942-43 figures. Further analysis shows that this reduction lies in the "not under proper control" and "living in a detrimental environment" groupings.

(b) *Offences:* The total number of appearances before the Courts for all offences, including breaches of special Acts, regulations, and by-laws, over the past three years are respectively as follows: 1942-43, 2,446; 1943-44, 2,493; and 1944-45, 2,012. These numbers show reductions of 19 per cent. and 18 per cent. when comparing 1945 with 1944 and 1943 respectively.

The figures for offences against morality and the person show no appreciable change, while those for theft, conversions, delinquency, and miscellaneous show marked decreases.

The total of appearances for breaches of special Acts, traffic regulations, and by-laws is 281, as against 406 in the 1943-44 period. This is a reduction of approximately 31 per cent. Reasons for such a decrease are difficult to find, but it appears that there have been during the year an increased number of minor offences dealt with by the Welfare Officers, the police, and local authorities without recourse to Court action.

(3) *District Court Appearances.*—All child welfare districts show a decrease for total Court appearances with the exception of Hamilton-Rotorua and Masterton areas, which show increases of 7 and 2 respectively. Marked decreases in the other districts range from approximately 20 per cent. to over 50 per cent.

For offences, Hamilton-Rotorua, Palmerston North, Greymouth, and Timaru show slight but insignificant increases, all other centres showing a decrease, slight in some cases but marked in others.

(4) *Possible Reasons for Decrease.*—Since many factors are involved, some of them obscure, it is not an easy task to explain the decrease. There are several possibilities which may help to account for the present position. There has been a lessening of war tension and an increase in the number of fathers returned to their homes; visiting teachers have been working in seven centres in co-operation with the schools and the Child Welfare Branch for about two years; in addition, the preventive work of the Branch has been broadened and intensified. The figures over the years 1940-44 do not show any marked variation in the total number of offences. This year's figures indicate, I trust, a returning to more normal conditions.

(5) *Repeaters.*—At present the term "repeater" is given a very wide interpretation for the purpose of our statistical returns, there being no time limit set between the child's first and second or subsequent Court appearances for offences. The question of a more useful definition is therefore receiving attention in order to place this aspect of our statistical work on a more stable basis. In the meantime, retaining the extremely wide definition used in all previous reports, the figures for the last three years as supplied by district offices are 364, 368, and 302 respectively.