

I know, many parents who can provide suitably for another child in their homes, and to those who are willing to do so I cannot stress too strongly the worth-while social service they would render.

At the 31st March there were 1,858 children placed in foster-homes, and I take this opportunity of expressing grateful thanks to all the foster-parents who, for years past in many cases, have given homes to our State wards.

#### EDUCATION

Children under the guardianship of the State have the same opportunities as other children of receiving primary and higher education. With the exception of a small number of children whose education is provided for at institutions, State wards attend the ordinary schools in the community. Children are encouraged to continue with their post-primary schooling whenever this is justified, and pupils with special aptitudes are assisted by the Department to attend University. At the 31st March, 1947, 294 of the children placed in foster-homes were receiving post-primary education and 13 Maori children were residential pupils at Maori colleges.

#### PLACEMENT IN EMPLOYMENT

Except in a few cases, State wards placed in employment received standard rates of wages. The exceptions comprise those young people who, for reasons of physical or mental handicap, are unable to compete on equal terms with their fellow-workers of the same age. In these cases particular care is taken to arrange for placement in the right environment, and under-rate workers' permits are obtained through the local officers of the Labour Department. When young people are placed in employment, every consideration is given to their desires and aptitudes, and the services of the Department's Vocational Guidance Officers are freely utilized.

Initial outfits are supplied free of cost, and in cases where a young person is not self-supporting the Department subsidizes his wages to enable him to meet his living-expenses. As soon as it is possible to do so a Post Office Savings-bank account is opened in the young person's name and a portion of his earnings is banked for his future use.

At the 31st March there were 983 State wards (618 boys and 365 girls) in employment. Of these, 67 (65 boys and 2 girls) were apprenticed to various trades, and, of the total number, 281 (153 boys and 128 girls) in the early stages of their employment were receiving assistance from the Department with their board, clothing, books, fees, &c. Boys were employed as follows: farm hands, 347; factory hands, 39; shop-assistants, 23; labourers, 30; and the remainder, 179, in various other occupations. Girls were employed as follows: domestics, 154; factory hands, 81; shop-assistants, 31; clerical workers, 46; nurses, 19; and the remainder, 34, in various other occupations.

#### COMMITTALS AND ADMISSIONS

The number of committals by Courts was 449, as against 446 for the previous year. Private admissions by arrangement with parents was 140, as against 146.

#### DISCHARGES FROM CONTROL

A total of 758 children were discharged during the year, the average age at discharge being sixteen years and one month. They had either reached an age when they could fend for themselves or were no longer in need of care or oversight by the Department. Many of them while still quite young returned to their relatives or friends. In special cases, where the young person may need continued help from the Department, control is retained up to the age of twenty or twenty-one years. These are cases of mental or physical handicap or cases in which the young person requires assistance with his training course.