

No. 1.—EXTRACT FROM THE THIRTY-THIRD ANNUAL REPORT OF THE  
MINISTER OF EDUCATION.

SPECIAL SCHOOLS : AFFLICTED AND DEPENDENT CHILDREN.

The special schools of the Dominion provide for the instruction of children who are deaf, blind, feeble-minded, epileptic, delinquent, neglected, or indigent. The function of such schools in the educational system of a country is to endeavour to overcome as far as practicable the disabilities under which these young people suffer, and ultimately to give them an equipment for their work in life that will enable them to maintain themselves without assistance from the public funds or from their friends.

At the end of the year the total number belonging to these schools was 2,539, and the net charge on the public funds for the year was £42,385. The figures for each class of school were as follows :—

	Number under Government Control.	Net Cost. £
School for the Deaf	89	4,038
Jubilee Institute for the Blind	39	687
Special School for Boys of Feeble Mind	31	4,103
Industrial Schools	2,380	33,557

Of the total cost, £7,441 represents the amount expended in the purchase of land, erection of buildings, and equipment of institutions. The total amount collected from parents and guardians by way of payment towards the cost of education and maintenance was £7,059.

The establishment of a special school for the training of boys of feeble mind has now been accomplished, and, though still in its infancy, there is good ground for anticipating that its effect in training boys of this class to make a living for themselves will fully justify its existence. It is, however, at least equally important that there should be a similar school for girls, and this matter is now under the consideration of the Government.

Another pressing need is a new industrial school for boys who, though not vicious, are by temperament not fit for placing out with foster-parents in private homes. The number resident at the existing Government institution for this class of boys has now reached the limit up to which that individual training can be effectively given that is essential to the formation of a boy's character, and therefore there must be no delay in taking action to meet the demand for another school. Such a need is not to be taken as an unfavourable indication of the moral tone of the youth of the Dominion. It is to some extent due to the natural increase of population; but a far more cogent reason is to be found in the greater recognition by Magistrates and the police of the fact that by means of such institutions boys who are delinquent through want of amenability to control, parental laxity, and similar causes, receive a training to fit them for the duties of citizenship that otherwise would be denied them. The Department has evidence too clear to admit of dispute that the expenditure in connection with the administration of the industrial-schools system is amply recovered to the country, on the one hand in the very large number of worthy and prosperous men and women who owe their positions to the upbringing they have thus received, and on the other hand in the staying of the tide of destitution and insanity, criminality, and other degradation.

Important amendments were made by the Legislature last session in the Industrial Schools Act. Attention may be drawn to two of these, especially that which gives power to a Magistrate to extend from time to time the period of control over a young man or woman who is adjudged by him to be morally degenerate or otherwise not (in the public interest) a fit person to be free from control. The other far-reaching provision is that giving power to the police to bring before a Magistrate on warrant, with a view to admission to an industrial school, any boy or girl under sixteen years of age who "is not under proper control."