

The saving effected by the scheme is very considerable. The cost to the State for maintenance computed at 10s. a week for each boy would have been at least £7,700 in three years and a half. The only expenditure involved covered the salary and travelling-expenses of one officer, who, in addition to his special duties, visited boys placed out from industrial schools in the Auckland District, collected maintenance payments, made inquiry regarding children suitable for admission to special schools, and generally acted as the Department's representative throughout the Auckland District.

In addition to dealing with actual delinquents the probation system has been further developed in Auckland in the direction of placing under the supervision of the Probation Officer children who come under the notice of the police as being somewhat uncontrollable, or through having committed petty offences more or less as the result of thoughtlessness or mischievousness. The almost invariable result has been that a few months' probation has prevented further development—that is to say, in the majority of those cases the need for more severe methods and probably for subsequent commitment to an industrial school has been rendered unnecessary. By the extension of the system to the other centres of population it will be possible to place out a great many of the boys and girls who are at present detained at industrial schools. In fact, a considerable number have already been placed out, and so far the results have been satisfactory. The essential merit of the probation system is that it is preventive rather than punitive, and has for its object the strengthening of character in these children in the natural surroundings of their own homes.

In this connection I may point out that in the United States and many parts of Europe there has been a sharp check in the building of institutions for dependent children, largely owing to the rapid development of the placing-out system. In Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin the State institutions have not required enlargement for many years. The building of such homes in Ohio and Indiana has come to a standstill. In Indiana eight or ten such institutions have already been closed and others are likely to follow, and this movement is rapidly extending to the other States.

In Great Britain the fostering-out of children has largely taken the place of the work formerly carried on in large institutional buildings. In fact, the trend of modern systems of child-caring for dependent and neglected children is away from institutionalism and towards placing in selected foster-homes; and even in cases where the permanent care of children must be by way of the institution, as in the case of defectives, incorrigible, abnormal, or crippled children, then the modern tendency is to devise institutions approximating as nearly as possible to the conditions in an ordinary family home rather than the assembling of great numbers of children in one large building.

It is very important to note the effect such a system is bound to have on the parents of the children. It must be recognized that commitment to an industrial school and the consequent transfer of the legal guardianship of the child to the State necessarily results in many cases in the severing of family ties which it should be the duty of the State from a social viewpoint to endeavour to foster rather than to discourage. One of the main virtues of the probation system, therefore, is that it preserves such relations until actual admission to an institution becomes the last resort for the treatment of the child. In many cases where a child is brought under the control of a Probation Officer a parent is brought to realize for the first time the results of laxity of control or of practices which the child may have entered upon without the parents' knowledge. In most cases parents realize the danger, and take steps to guard their children against having to be committed to an industrial institution; thus not only is the child protected in one instance, but his general training is improved as a result of altered home conditions. Such a result is far more desirable from a national point of view than a reformation through residence in an institution.

The Juvenile Court, far from being an enemy, is an aid to the home and the school in the training of the child. If other agencies fail the Court, through probation methods, does the best it can to supply the deficiency, and it must ever be remembered that the Court needs and should demand the help and co-operation of the parent, the school, the civic authorities, and of society generally. They in turn should understand that the effort being put forth is in the best interests of the child, and to secure his obedience and respect for law and order.