Children in Care, 1963

The Home Office has published particulars of the number of children in care in England and Wales last year.* On March 31st, 1963, this was 64,807; 1,159 more than on March 31st, 1962, and the highest number recorded since November 30th, 1953, when it stood at 65,309.

24,837 children were received into care during the twelve months of 31/3/1963 because of the short-term illness of a parent or the confinement of the mother. Most would remain in care for a limited period only, usually not exceeding six months. During the year 40,225 children were restored to the care of parents, guardians, relatives or friends. 4,642 children were committed to the care of a local authority and a "fit person" by order of a court; of these only 1,185 were committed as the result of some offence against the law.

Children who are the subject of a fit person order tend to remain in care for relatively long periods. 21,264 were in this category on March 31st, 1963, while 31,208 were boarded out; 960 more than a year before.

Social Work Courses

Already the Council for Training in Social Work shows an impressive list of courses of training it has approved. These can all lead to the award of the Council's Certificate in Social Work which qualifies people for work in the local authorities' Health and Welfare Services and in voluntary bodies engaged in similar work. Social work in these departments is concerned with providing help to individuals and families living in the community who are in difficulty because of mental or physical disability, homelessness or old age, and it is for this skilled and demanding work that trained workers are needed. The basic local authority scale in 1964 for Social Welfare Officers will be £710-£1,075 and a further increase will become effective in 1965.

*Published by H.M.S.O., Is. 3d. Cmnd. 2240.

Applications for courses are usually required in the late Autumn with closing dates in the New Year. The National Institute for Social Work Training, Mansion House, 5-7 Tavistock Place, London W.C.1, runs a one-year course. Two-year courses are already being provided by Bristol, Birmingham, Cardiff, Croydon, Coventry, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, London and Glasgow. The following districts begin two-year courses approved by the Council in September 1964: Belfast, Chiswick, Dagenham, High Wycombe and Newcastle-on-Tyne.

A leaflet giving further details can be obtained from the Council at 1 Prince's Gate, London, S.W.7.

Refugees and Mental Illness

The newsletter of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for November 1963 included a news-item about the work of Dr. Peter Berner, an Australian psychiatrist who has served as Mental Health Adviser to UNHCR since 1960 and in a report submitted to a session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme stated that, in his opinion, "psychiatric disturbances could generally be more easily remedied in the case of refugees than of the average population."

He based his findings on experience of supervising attempts to develop and supply solutions for the problems of 1,828 "special cases" among the non-settled refugee population in Austria, Germany, Greece and Italy. By June 30th, 1963, 891 persons in this group had been treated successfully and no longer presented difficulties relating to their mental health. Of the remaining 937, 376 were under treatment and 565 under observation.

Dr. Berner's explanation of the greater ease of treating refugees as compared with the average population is interesting. He writes: "The special situation of the refugees, and in particular of those living in camps, leads to two types of reaction: apathy or revolt, each of which results in social behaviour. Other people, to whose life gives better opportunities to express
their personality, have these two types of reaction only when they suffer from severe psychological disorders. The refugee, on the other hand, who has fewer outlets than other people, may choose this pattern of behaviour even though he may be suffering from a relatively minor psychic disturbance. Furthermore, in spite of his seemingly unbalanced behaviour, the refugee is quite often capable of sound adaptation once he becomes firmly settled.

U.S. CENTRE FOR MENTAL RETARDATION

This year the first regional Research Centre for Mental Retardation, proposed by the late President Kennedy’s Special Panel, will be completed. It will be in the Training School, Vineland, New Jersey, U.S.A., located on a 200-acre site and consist of two connected concrete buildings, each of two storeys and a basement, with a total area of 1,250,000 cubic feet. One building will comprise a 40-bed hospital with diagnostic facilities. The other will house research projects, with six laboratories and ten experimental rooms.

When Pearl Buck, President of the Board of Trustees of the institution, announced this project she pointed out that over 5.4 million people in the United States are mentally retarded, and it is estimated that 126,000 babies will be born each year with this affliction.

The new Centre would conduct clinical, laboratory and field research; train additional research manpower; and carry on demonstrations for the application of experimentation with new findings and new techniques; in other words, work within the three basic areas of activity for such centres recommended by the Special Panel for Mental Retardation created by President Kennedy.

ILLEGITIMACY RATE

During an adjournment debate in the House of Commons on February 7th, 1964, Mr. Leo Abse quoted statistics showing that in the ten years since 1953, the proportion of illegitimate births has risen from 4.8% to 6.4%; that some 50,000 illegitimate births now occur each year, representing about 1 in 15 of all births; and that—even excluding those who are subsequently legitimised or adopted—there are probably more than two million illegitimate people in Britain.

LIVERPOOL RHB NEWS

Among action initiated at the February meeting of the Liverpool Regional Hospital Board was the setting up of a project team for a scheme for the provision at Olive Mount Children’s Hospital of accommodation for 120 female adolescent mentally subnormal helpless cases. This will be financed from savings due to the reduction of beds to be provided in the final phase of the Greaves Hall Hospital developments and the accommodation is to be provided during the 1964/65 and 1965/66 financial years.

BEPA ACTIVITIES

Recent meetings and courses organised by the British Epilepsy Association have included talks by Mr. Norman Paget, Fulbright Scholar, on parent guidance in cases of social and physical handicap and Dr. Barbara Tizard on The Epileptic Personality; and a course in March, mainly for almoners and welfare workers, with particular reference to the social aspects of epilepsy, which included a programme of visits to a North London Club, to the Lingfield Hospital School, to Chalfont Colony, to an L.C.C. rehabilitation and occupation centre for all kinds of heavily handicapped people including epileptics, and to sheltered workshops at Meer en Hosch, Holland.

OVERSEAS RESEARCH EXPEDITION

This expedition undertook an overland journey through Europe and Asia in 1963 to Australia, and consisted of a physics graduate, a psychology graduate, a chartered accountant, a medical practitioner and his wife, secretary to the group. It aimed at the following work-programme:

(a) Student Health and Welfare Problems in Asia

(1) to survey the scope and organisation of student health services, with special reference to particular needs of individual services.

(2) to survey the major health and welfare problems in student
communities and their effects on those communities. Aspects to be examined included such facets of physical health as nutrition, infectious diseases and ocular disorders; mental health and social, cultural and sports facilities.

(b) Voluntary Services
(1) to visit, observe and participate in projects in progress.
(2) to disseminate information on the work of these services.
(3) to seek suitable projects in which British volunteers might participate.

c) Youth Services
(1) To contact youth service workers to discuss the need, if any, for advice and volunteers.
(2) to study the organisation of youth clubs and movements and to disseminate information on youth services in different countries.
(3) to participate, where desired, in youth projects in progress.

ADULT TRAINING CENTRES
The 5th Local Authority Building Note issued by the Ministry of Health bears this title and is obtainable from H.M.S.O. for 2s. The Note comments that “In general, adult training centres should be planned, equipped and organised on workshop lines in contrast to the school-like pattern of the junior centres. It is not necessary to segregate men and women. Depending on the trainees’ ability and the location of the centre, training may be included for industrial and domestic subjects, simple sedentary occupations and outdoor pursuits. The main emphasis is likely to be on industrial work, although in rural areas horticulture is likely to play a larger part in training.” In examining design the Report points out that “The extent to which provision for change can be reflected . . . depends on:
(a) Study of requirements of workshop planning.
(b) Development of simple structural envelopes, either single or multi-storey, which allow for the division in usable spaces for different activities.
(c) Standardisation of layout and provision for the extension of engineering services.

(d) Provision for future lateral or vertical growth of particular areas.
(e) Use of building components to achieve interchangeability when functions change.”

MORE BEDS NEEDED
The Minister of Health has accepted the need for more hospital beds for mentally ill and seriously maladjusted children and adolescents. The Nursing Mirror of January 31st, 1964, comments: “Although it is difficult to make a firm estimate of the need, hospitals have been given interim advice to increase the number of beds to 20/25 per million population for assessment and short-term treatment, with additional provision for long-stay treatment on the scale of 25 beds per region. Provision for adolescents should be increased to 20/25 beds per million. These are immediate objectives to be achieved while the Minister is considering the need for a survey of the total need for in-patient care.”

NEUROTIC DISORDERS
One quarter of the adult population of Britain is believed to be handicapped by psychiatric disorders says the Mental Health Research Fund’s latest pamphlet Anxiety and Fear*. The pamphlet states that the majority suffer from neuroses caused by anxiety and fear which itself has no obvious cause. The incidence of anxiety neuroses seems likely to have greatly increased over the past half-century, while the rate of those suffering from major psychoses—schizophrenia and depression—has changed little. Anxiety and Fear stresses that better understanding of the causes and treatment of anxiety neuroses is badly held up for lack of research. Existing staff and research facilities are unlikely to resolve, for several generations, the hundreds of questions awaiting answers—though most of the answers might be known now if one-tenth of the thousands of millions spent by neurotics on treatment had been devoted to systematic research.

Among suggestions put forward in the pamphlet is the theory that neurosis may have a purpose; that some neurotic drive

* Obtainable at 1s. (nett.) from Mental Health National Appeal, 8 Wimpole Street, London, W.1.
may be useful and that practices of child-rearing designed to "iron out" anxiety may be undesirable. The total absence of anxiety or fear in the face of difficulty or danger can denote a more serious condition than over-anxiety. Another theory mentioned is that anxiety states which have no apparent cause could be the result of "displaced" anxiety, produced by the threat of annihilation in a hydrogen bomb war.

**FIRST COUNCIL MEETING**

The newly constituted Council to promote the provision of training for the staff (including hospital staff) of training centres for the mentally subnormal, and to approve courses of training, held its first meeting at the Ministry of Health in February; the Chairman, Lady Adrian, presiding. The other members of the Council are Dr. R. T. Bevan, Senior Medical Officer, Welsh Board of Health, Mrs. R. M. Blake, Organiser of training centres, Cornwall County Council, Mr. G. A. Bland, School Superintendent, Brockhall Hospital, Professor A. D. B. Clarke, Professor of Psychology, University of Hull, Mr. A. H. Edwards, County Mental Health Officer, Somerset, The Rt. Hon. Lord Grenfell, Hon. Treasurer, N.S.M.H.C., Lt. Col. G. A. Grounds, Lincolnshire (Holland) County Council, Miss H. M. Hedley, Assistant Secretary, Ministry of Health, Mr. J. A. Hudson, Assistant Secretary, Ministry of Education, Mr. S. J. Lidstone, Principal, Great Yarmouth College of Further Education, Miss M. Lindsay, Educational Adviser, N.A.M.H., Mr. J. Lumsden, Staff Inspector (H. M. Inspectorate), Ministry of Education, Mrs. D. Ottley, Deputy Chief Welfare Officer, Ministry of Health, Dr. R. C. N. Pearson, Medical Officer of Health, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Miss G. Rawlings, Consultant Psychologist, University College Hospital, London, Dr. J. A. Scott, Medical Officer of Health, L.C.C., and Dr. R. J. Stanley, Consultant Psychiatrist and Medical Superintendent, Monyhull Hospital.

**SCOTTISH MENTAL ILLNESS**

At the end of 1962 there were 20,000 mentally ill patients in Scottish hospitals, of whom 2,300 were detained under compulsory powers. During the year almost 15,000 patients were admitted to mental hospitals, 13,000 without formality.

**SCHIZOPHRENIA FELLOWSHIP**

Dr. Donald Straughan has been awarded the Rothschild Research Fellowship by the trustees of the Schizophrenia Research Fund to work in the Department of Psychological Medicine, University of Edinburgh, on problems of the biochemical basis of schizophrenia.

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**PSYCHIATRIC TEACHING FILMS**

A number of teaching films have recently been produced on behalf of the R.M.P.A., including the following:

- **The Subnormality Picture.** 16 mm. b/w. 15 mins.
- **Huntington's Chorea.** 16 mm. b/w. 15 mins.
- **Paraphrenia.** 16 mm. b/w. 8 mins.

These films are intended for medical audiences only and application for their use should be made to R.M.P.A., 11 Chandos Street, London, W.1.

They are included in the 25 films to be shown on 4th and 5th June at Colour Film Services at the Psychiatric Film Viewing Sessions for Professional Users, arranged by the Mental Health Film Council.

Congratulations to Epsom League of Friends for Mental Health who gained a Bronze Award in the British Medical Association Film Competition for their film 'The Outstretched Hand'.