

any guarantee, in sending a child home on trial, that anything at all will be done for him in the nature of training. We are naturally hesitant—knowing that he will likely be allowed to drift, and that his mother will find the burden too heavy for her, and that the chances are that he will come back to us—unhappy and unmanageable—in a very few months.

Thirdly, I would like to see a more systematic and a much more skilled psychological service for defectives all round; in School, Special School, Occupation Centre, and Institution, and I would like a very much more efficient record system, so that a child transferred from Special School to Occupation Centre, Occupation Centre to Institution, or the other way round, would take with him an adequate record of his previous history and of the results of his examination by really competent specialists.

Fourthly, I would like to see the Occupation Centre system extended far more widely and exploited more fully. I would like to see it used for some of the lower grade children in the Special Schools and especially I would like to see it used for more *adults*. True there is even now some more attempt to do something for the adult defective in this way, but with a stronger organisation, and better co-ordination of the services, I feel sure that quite an appreciable number of adult imbeciles, at present in institutions, could be adequately cared for in the community.

SOME EXPERIENCES OF AN EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGIST

By GRACE RAWLINGS, B.A.

Educational Psychologist, C.A.M.W.

Exactly four years ago, the Central Association for Mental Welfare appointed an Education Psychologist, who, besides assisting at the Association's well-established Training Courses for Teachers, was to be loaned to Education Authorities. This arrangement provided an opportunity whereby Authorities doubtful of the scope and value of a psychologist's work might have his, or her, services on trial for a few months in their own area without the complications and commitments involved by themselves making a temporary or a permanent appointment. The plan had a wide appeal for, in a very short time, the psychologist's services were booked in terms of three or six months, for a period of five years! In fact, to meet the demands of Local Authorities for such services the Association has employed during the past three years three—and at one period, four—full-time workers.

Perhaps it is interesting at this stage to place on record a few first impressions about this newer branch of the Association's work, although many of these impressions must be left in abeyance until—in my retirement—I write "The Memoirs of a School Psychologist"!

In the beginning, there was much uncertainty about the exact functions of the psychologist. The C.A.M.W.'s Education Committee suggested to Education Authorities various definite ways in which she might be helpful, but the Authorities were slow to make their choice or to express their wishes and their usual request "to be shown what a psychologist was for," tended to make one feel like an inexperienced commercial traveller uncertain of the nature of his samples! However, it must be admitted that although it increases responsibility, such an attitude provides opportunities which many would envy and offers the thrill of devising and carrying out a plan for a purpose.

Slowly—or perhaps not so slowly—a plan of work emerged, and is even now changing since it has already almost played its part. Authorities at first chiefly wanted to know the number of children requiring special treatment on account of backwardness or problem behaviour, and to have suggestions as to ways of providing for such children which would be most appropriate to local conditions. Given three months, or even six, in which to gather data that would yield an answer to the first question and at the same time collect those observations which must form the basis for recommendations as to treatment, how should one's time be spent?

In the first place, having decided the details of procedure in conference with the Director of Education, it is necessary to spend a little time gaining the cooperation of the teachers on whose help the psychologist must depend for gathering data. It is usual to have a meeting of Head Teachers at which the plans for the period of work are presented and at which the psychologist asks for the information that will be required. This information is usually only the name and date of birth of the children considered seriously backward in school work, and perhaps also of children showing nervous or difficult behaviour, but an attempt has to be made to come to some common understanding of the term "seriously backward".

During the week or so before these returns come in from the various schools, the psychologist has to be installed in an office, to meet her temporary colleagues, to go through any records that exist of previous work in connection with this group of children, to visit classes for backward children and to visit any Special Schools in the area. If the area is large and the time for the work limited, it is possible to examine a sample only of the children referred by their teachers. When this is the case, the psychologist must wait until all the returns have been received from schools before she can construct her sample and begin examining the children. In this period of preparation she must forecast with some precision the amount of work she can get through so that no part of the precious three or six months shall be wasted. Although the length of the examination varies with individual children, it is not difficult to find an average of how many children can be examined in a given time. What is far more difficult is to know how much time to allow for discussion with the teachers about the

treatment of the cases they bring forward and for the many "incidentals" that do not crop up until one is somewhat less of a stranger and has begun to be accepted by school staffs and colleagues at the Education Office. These "incidentals" are signs of the willingness on the part of local staffs and officials to discover the uses of a psychologist; it would, therefore, be most unwise to rule them out on the ground that they are not connected with the survey in hand. The Education Committee might be satisfied with a report on an investigation conducted solely according to the psychologist's own plan, but when the question of a permanent appointment is raised, it is teachers, probation and school attendance officers who are asked what value the work was to them, and naturally they will remember any remark that contributed to the elucidation of a particular problem, any suggestion that led to more satisfactory response from a difficult child, or even an attitude that gave them confidence to share the responsibility of a pressing decision. Therefore time must be given to the additional problems that are raised by teachers and others. These include examining and reporting upon children who are:—

- (a) to come before the juvenile court.
- (b) to be sent to an Approved School.
- (c) queried mentally defective?
- (d) disappointing in Secondary Schools.

It includes also "going over" the results of the Annual Schools or Free Place examinations and conferring on the theory of setting and marking papers—discussing with teachers the uses of Group Tests of Intelligence—seeing (at their request) parents who are worried about their children,—seeing foster-parents about children to be boarded out.

The main part of the Educational Psychologist's work, however, is in schools, and involves the psychological examination of a proportion of the children referred by the teachers. The children are given an individual Intelligence Test and usually one or more Attainment Tests of Intelligence. This means that each child is with the psychologist for upwards of three-quarters of an hour, during which time observations can be made of his general mental development. At the end of a day of such testing the psychologist writes a few notes on each child examined in which she indicates:—

- (1) The degree of backwardness.
- (2) The degree of subnormality (if any) in mental development.
- (3) The child's type of intellect, e.g., whether verbal ability, reasoning capacity, rote memory, etc., are good, normal or poor for his age and/or mental level.
- (4) The implication of these findings for the child's future learning and development.

These notes are taken to the school concerned and talked over with the Head

and/or class teacher and, at the same time, the psychologist will gather whatever information she can about the child's attendance record and school placement and progress. Thus the school receives detailed information about some of its scholars and, frequently, suggestions for the treatment of their backwardness and idiosyncrasies, which suggestions teachers—according to their facilities—incorporate into their classroom work. Further, the psychologist obtains information about the potentialities of the children according to which she can classify them and recommend steps that could be taken for the amelioration of their condition which would contribute towards their mental health.

While testing in schools it is not easy always to have conditions that are ideal for a psychological examination. Teachers who are interested are, quite naturally, very anxious to be present and generally want to watch the testing of just those children whom their presence would disturb the most! Frequently the examinations are carried out in the Head Teacher's room, which makes it particularly difficult for the psychologist to be left alone with the child. Moreover, there is the point that teachers' interest should be welcomed and encouraged and that a good way of fostering it and increasing their understanding of some of the children's difficulties is to allow them to be present at a psychological examination. Personally, I welcome the opportunity of discussing this point with them but end by asking to be left alone with the child or—as a concession—admitting each teacher to one examination only, asking them to choose a child who is not particularly nervous; further, I take the precaution of deciding upon a sign to be made if I think it desirable for the teacher to withdraw. The question of accommodation is frequently a difficult one—especially in smaller schools where there is no teachers' room or available space for an extra worker who wants to be isolated and quiet. There have been several schools that I could not visit on wet days because the only available space was the playground! At country schools in the summer I have frequently tested out of doors; other "abodes" have been village halls, doctors' rooms, porches, passages and cloak-rooms. Only the last mentioned proved to be really impossible—and that because of the apparently constant necessity for preparing for and clearing up after, painting lessons!

Several enquiries have been carried out along these lines, but the tendency now is for Education Authorities to be less concerned to know the exact number of children for whom they have to make some special educational provision than to have some demonstration of the types of special class and tutorial groups that can be arranged in ordinary elementary schools for children needing special treatment. We are now in a transitional stage, so far as our short term periods of work are concerned, but soon psychologists, and more particularly those whose appointments are on a permanent basis, will—I feel certain—start right away on carrying out a programme of work in which diagnosis will be followed immediately by appropriate treatment. The gap that now exists—often it is more than 12 months—between diagnosis made in the course of a survey, and treat-

ment after the Committee have adopted some of the recommendations, will be reduced to a few weeks and at the same time ascertainment of cases will be more complete.

There were two great disadvantages of the research type of work that our Surveys had in the first place to adopt:—

- (1) The numerical incompleteness of ascertainment and diagnosis since more children are referred than can possibly be dealt with in six months.
- (2) The inevitable delay, for obvious reasons, before any extensive system of classes or tutorial groups could be formed in which remedial teaching could be given.

That a change is foreshadowed—indeed becoming obvious—is due to the acceptance by Local Education Authorities of the value of a psychologist's services in helping forward a more satisfactory and more individual adjustment of just those children who are a trouble to adults and a responsibility to the community.

Something has been said of the attitude of administrators towards our work—what of the attitude of teachers? Naturally one finds many Head and Class Teachers who are less interested in exceptional individuals than in the normal progress of the majority. A few Heads regard the schools largely as their own responsibility; they do not welcome interference from officials and have no desire to consult psychologists. Many more are a little chary of innovations and are somewhat fearful lest they do not realise the fullest implications of this new departure. But these are far out-numbered by men and women who are open-minded and even by those who have a precise idea of how they can get the best out of a psychologist's visit. The thing that impresses me again and again is the unflinching friendliness and co-operation shown to an investigator who is only a bird of passage and who, moreover, gives inevitably a great deal of extra trouble! This is true both of the sceptics and of the converted. One cannot fail to appreciate the candour with which the unconverted discuss their point of view and it is worth a good deal to hear a seasoned Head Teacher grant "there's more in this than meets the eye"! A serious difficulty is the lack of opportunity for discussing with class teachers the handling of backward and problem children. This difficulty would be lessened naturally if one's appointment were permanent—but their keenness shows itself in the way they turn up at lectures and discussion groups and their readiness to come to the Education Offices by appointment out of school hours.

Educational Psychologists are in no danger of eating the bread of idleness. The routine examinations are carried through in close succession and this is very exacting work in which one must be equally patient and observant throughout the day; there must be no evidence of fatigue, and reassurance must come just as readily for the last child as for the first. But this is not at all a superhuman task because the children themselves bring endless change, variety and interest. There is the case that is a challenge because it is so intricate to unravel; on

the other hand, in a burst of confidence a child may give you his difficulty in a nutshell. There is the pleasure of seeing a child gain confidence as the examination proceeds and the amusement at being told that a "brunette" is a "mother bear". (These feelings of the psychologist must be kept well guarded, but they are the minor pleasures that contribute to the major satisfaction that a psychologist, being human, feels in being a psychologist!) The examinations entail written reports, discussion and eventually statistics, and that is not always the end of a psychologist's day. There are lectures to teachers, and finally talks to other interested groups, e.g., magistrates, child study associations, Y.M.C.A., etc.

Even in so short a period as four years, changes in attitude towards a psychologist's work can be easily observed on the part of both administrators and teachers but the most convincing evidence of change comes from another sphere. An office cleaner said to me recently: "Eh, Miss, I wish you'd have a look at my three-year-old twins!" Whereas less than three years ago a school caretaker was heard to remark "Um, now the season's over at Blackpool I suppose Madame Destiny has come to ——"!

MENTAL DEFICIENCY ADMINISTRATION, 1937

The Board of Control's Report for 1937 has recently been published, and the following summary gives the salient facts with regard to mental deficiency administration during that year.

Numbers under Care

On January 1st, 1938, there was a total number of 86,510 defectives under care, of which 44,263 were in Institutions, 4,430 were under Guardianship or Notified, and 37,817 were under Statutory Supervision. This represents an increase of 3,784 on the corresponding figures for 1936.

Ascertainment

In the number of defectives reported to Local Authorities (whether "subject to be dealt with" or not) there was an increase of 4,830, the number being 121,977, viz., 2.99 per 1,000 of the population as against 2.88 per 1,000. In addition, 3,382 feeble-minded children between 14 and 16 were reported informally for voluntary supervision (compared with 3,584 in the previous year). Adding these two groups of cases together, the total number of defectives reported was 125,359 (viz., 3.07 per 1,000). The total number, subject to be dealt with, was 92,449.

The number of children notified by Local Education Authorities (under Section 2 (2) of the Mental Deficiency Act, 1913) was 3,910, representing a decrease of 81 on the 1936 figures. In commenting on this unsatisfactory situation the Board draw attention to the lack of uniformity of method which exists in the practice of Local Education Authorities (the number of children notified varies from 3.20 per 10,000 of the population in Plymouth, to none at all in Merthyr Tydfil and West Hartlepool) and urge a closer measure of co-operation between the Authorities concerned. Especially is this important in the case of feeble-minded children leaving school—a question which is deemed by the Board to be "by far the most urgent in relation to ascertainment which Local Authorities have to face."