

Trends in Juvenile Delinquency.—The first three years of the Second World War were marked by serious and rapid increases in juvenile delinquency. This was to some extent the outcome of the 'broken home' situation brought about by the enlistment of the male parent, the resultant removal of the father's restraining influence and the increase in the responsibilities placed upon the mother during his absence. The figures for 1942 reached an all-time high with 11,758 major and minor convictions. Since then there has been a gradual decline to 7,545 in 1947, the lowest figure since 1938. Though the continued decline is encouraging, efforts should not be slackened to attain even better results.

Many factors are contributing to the apparent reduction in cases of delinquency. Communities are realizing that the solution to this problem is to be found in an extension of opportunities that will provide wholesome occupation for after-school hours, early detection and treatment of delinquents, better psychiatric service for schools and mental hygiene clinics, trained personnel for probation and juvenile court work, better parenthood through home and school associations and adult education programs and improved housing. There is no longer the opportunity for highly paid employment which lured young people from school during the War. A more sympathetic interest in the activities of youth on the part of the police is evident in the assignment of special constables to juvenile cases and the "police and youth" program inaugurated by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and adopted in many centres by municipal and provincial police (see p. 330).

On the federal level the development of a national physical fitness program in 1943, followed, in 1945, by the payment of family allowances for children under 16 years of age, the provision of special services in local offices of the National Employment Services for the placement of the 'first jobbers', and the continuance of a high rate of employment all assist in maintaining the downward trend.

In recent years changes have been made in provincial legislation for the better protection of children. For example, in 1943 British Columbia passed an Act to provide for the Protection of Children. In 1944 New Brunswick passed the Juvenile Court Act and Saskatchewan the Act to amend the Child Welfare Act whereby children, who were wards, came under the authority of the Department of Social Welfare rather than the Department of Labour and Public Welfare. In 1945 the Prince Edward Island Minimum Age for Industrial Employment was set at 15 years. In March, 1946, Alberta amended the Mothers Allowance Act raising the permissible age of a child attending school to 18 years if school-work is satisfactory. In the same year in Quebec, a Department of Social Welfare and Youth was created to take an active interest in the prevention of delinquency and the improvement of reform institutions; and in Ontario, a Department of Reform Institutions was established. In 1947 an Act was passed making provision for the establishment of a Nova Scotia School for Boys to serve as a reformatory for the older group of juvenile offenders.

Subsection 2.—Major Offences

Table 4 shows the convictions of juveniles for major offences for the years 1938-47.

In the ten-year period 1938-47, the number of convictions for major offences per 100,000 of the population of the age group 7 to 16 years went as high as 357 in the peak year of 1942, while in 1947 it was 243.