

More Day Nurseries

One of the more serious, if less conspicuous, social problems arising from the war has to do with the welfare of young children whose parents are actively engaged in supporting the country's effort, the fathers often in the armed forces and the mothers working in industry. The result of this condition has been an increase in juvenile delinquency which has alarmed government officials and child welfare bodies. A conference is to be held at Ottawa this week, called by Hon. Humphrey Mitchell, Minister of Labour, for the purpose of dealing with this question; social workers of Ontario and Quebec will attend, and it is hoped that plans will be laid for overcoming what is admitted to be a difficult situation.

It is not that parental authority has broken down; it is because such authority is largely absent in many homes that the well-being of children has suffered. In homes where the fathers are on active service and mothers are away at work all day, children are left to their own devices, except in cases where arrangements have been made to have a relative or an older girl look after them. Where there is no such supervision a pitiable degree of neglect has often been found. Young children are not able to look after themselves nor do they receive the proper care, as regards their mid-day meal, when their mother, or some sympathetic guardian, is not present to watch over them, advise and protect them from harm and exercise that vigilance which is so essential as the early teen years are approached.

Some means must therefore be found to take care of these children while their parents are performing other duties. The solution of the problem appears to lie in providing more day nurseries, and it is this phase of the question which is likely to be emphasized at the conference in Ottawa. By a measure passed this year by the Ontario Legislature, the Department of Public Welfare is now authorized to establish, or assist in establishing, such day nurseries for young children. The need for an adequate number of these part-time sanctuaries has been brought forcefully to the attention of the authorities as a result of the statistics gathered by police and social service workers. The home, as an institution and the basic centre of family life, can not be disregarded even in a crisis of world proportions. Its environment and wholesome influences must be preserved. Social workers and government officials alike appreciate that cardinal fact, and it is satisfying to know that they are grappling with the problem and striving to lessen its graver aspects.

149
WAR
EUROPEAN
1939
CANADA
[REDACTED]
WOMEN

editorial
spec.