

Whatever the future may bring in the way of shortages of men and materials, there will always be plenty of scope for educational advances in the class-room itself. In my report for 1939 I argued the need for the Education Department to assume to a greater degree than ever before the function of professional leadership, which has from time to time in its history been lost in the press of administrative detail. In the past few years teachers, particularly those in the primary schools, have been given a measure of freedom in the exercise of their craft such as they have never before known. Most of them have made excellent use of it, but if the best results are to be obtained it becomes increasingly obvious that the Department, besides giving freedom, must assume the more difficult task of helping and leading teachers to use that freedom to the full.

It became clear early in the year that if the Department and its officers in the field, the Inspectors, are to give leadership on the professional side to the extent that teachers have a right to expect, certain administrative changes must be made. A conference of Senior Inspectors of Primary Schools was held to plan future policy; as a result, certain administrative reforms have been decided upon, their main purpose being to allow primary-school Inspectors time and freedom to give their help when and where it is most needed. The annual grading of primary-school teachers is to be replaced by a system of biennial grading. Routine reports on schools will be made only every second year, and the confidential notes to teachers, which have steadily become more burdensome to the Inspectors and more useless to the teachers, will be given only in special cases. It has also been decided to abolish the rigid itineraries which bound every Inspector to move with almost clockwork regularity from school to school, spending almost the same limited period with every teacher no matter what his problems and his needs. In addition, changes are being made in the Head Office which will relieve professional officers, from the Director downwards, of much routine administrative detail and allow them to spend more time doing genuinely professional work with their colleagues in the field.

These changes should give the Inspectors a new opportunity to make their work genuinely creative. They will collaborate more closely than was previously possible with the training colleges; they will be free to organize refresher courses for teachers and special meetings for parents and committeemen; they will, if need be, spend several days at a time in a weak school or in one with interesting new developments; they will be expected to undertake special investigations and practical research within their areas: in short, they will be freed to assume the position of professional leadership in the schools and, as far as education is concerned, in the community at large that the Government has a right to expect of them. One result should be a stimulation of local initiative and the progressive breaking of that uniformity which visitors from overseas have sometimes professed to see in our school system.

In order to help both Inspectors and teachers there is being built up on the headquarters staff a corps of specialists in certain limited fields. The Advisers to Infant Rooms and the Supervisor of Special Classes have continued to do useful work; the recently appointed Superintendent of Physical Education initiated a new policy during 1940; and a new Principal of the Sumner School for the Deaf was appointed, part of whose duty it is to advise on departmental policy in the wide field of hearing and speech defects. In 1941 a Supervisor of Teaching Aids will take up duty; he will be responsible for the development of school broadcasting, films, film-strips, and teaching aids generally. It is hoped that in future years specialists in music and in arts and crafts will be added to the central staff. With the assistance of this corps of specialists the Inspectors, who are themselves sound general practitioners, will be able to give teachers positive assistance in all branches of school practice. During the coming year the *Education Gazette* will be altered in format and will, it is hoped, become the spearpoint of the new attack.

A necessary corollary to the Government's general interest in the physical welfare of New-Zealanders is a deepened interest in school medical services and physical education. A special drive on physical education in the primary schools was begun during the year. The English Board of Education 1933 syllabus was introduced to teachers through refresher courses, films, lectures, and demonstrations.