

REPORT OF THE CHIEF INSPECTOR OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS.

SIR,—

I have the honour to present the report for the year 1940 :—

STAFF.

Once again the personnel of the inspectorate has undergone considerable change. Mr. Caradus, Senior Inspector, who had been seconded to the Air Department in November, 1939, in order to become Director of Educational Services for the Air Force, was absent throughout the year. The temporary vacancy thus created was filled by the appointment of Miss M. J. Browne, B.A., B.Sc., of the Wellington Training College staff, and, as Mr. Fathers found himself unable to continue to act as temporary inspector in 1940, Mr. C. A. Noble, M.A., B.Sc., Mathematics and Science Master at the Christchurch West High School, was also given a temporary appointment. Both Miss Browne and Mr. Noble resigned their positions at the close of the year.

ROUTINE WORK.

Inspection work was fortunately interrupted very little by epidemics or other causes. Full inspections of seventeen secondary or combined schools were made in the earlier part of the year, sometimes in collaboration with the Technical School Inspectors. Twenty-eight registered private secondary schools—a larger number than usual—were also inspected and reported on. Visits were also paid to the secondary departments of thirty-four district high schools in the Auckland Education District and to the secondary branch of the Correspondence School. All secondary and combined schools were visited in the latter half of the year in connection with the annual classification of teachers and the award of Higher Leaving Certificates.

Notices of appeal against their classification were received from four teachers ; three appeals were withdrawn and one (heard in Auckland) was dismissed.

SCHOOL ROLLS AND STAFFING.

No change has taken place in the number of secondary and combined schools, which remains at forty-six (seven of them combined schools). On 1st March their aggregate roll was 19,787, and as the corresponding roll in the preceding year had been 20,017 it will be seen that there was a distinct fall, due no doubt in part to the disturbance in industry and the labour market caused by the war. No fewer than twenty-one secondary and two combined schools experienced a fall in attendance. The number of pupils resident in school hostels fell, slightly, from 1,744 in 1939 to 1,729. It is interesting to observe that the hostels have not yet exceeded the peak figure for boarders that was reached in the predepression days of 1929. The system of boarding-allowances instituted in 1937 has proved of immense benefit to children living in remote localities, and the assistance provided by this means continues to be eagerly sought. Last year, however, the number of allowances granted fell from 1,838 (in 1939) to 1,736, a decrease that was probably connected with the shortage of labour on farms brought about by war conditions. Whangarei High School, it may be added, again headed the list with 113 recipients of allowances, followed closely by Gisborne High School and New Plymouth Boys' High School.

The number of registered private secondary schools increases steadily year by year. During 1940 Chilton St. James School, Lower Hutt ; the Cathedral Grammar School, Christchurch ; and St. Patrick's Convent, Teschemakers, were added to the list, which now comprises fifty-nine schools. Their aggregate roll on 1st March was 5,523 (5,409 in 1939).

PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS.

The Public Service Examination, conducted by the Department for the Public Service Commissioner, has this last year experienced a very marked advance in popularity, the number of candidates increasing by nearly 37 per cent. (from 1,874 to 2,558). This development was not unexpected, owing to the Commissioner's efforts during the year to interest pupils in the Public Service as a career and also to the fact that girls were once again being admitted to the Service. Successful candidates in this examination numbered 1,710.

The number of candidates who sat the School Certificate Examination in conjunction with the University Entrance Examination was 4,698 (4,504 in 1939) ; the number of those, however, who sat the former as a single examination was, as usual, very small, only 342. This number, small as it is, is easily the best entry received since the certificate was instituted in 1934. The reason and the remedy for the present unsatisfactory position of the certificate were dealt with in my last report, and there is no need to repeat the remarks there made. The total number of certificates awarded was 2,423 (2,569 in 1939) and 893 candidates obtained partial passes (860 in 1939).

There was a distinct fall in the number of Higher Leaving Certificates awarded to pupils from secondary and combined schools, only 920 being issued, as against 1,009 in the preceding year. In addition, 271 were granted to pupils from endowed and registered private secondary schools. These certificates, which confer upon the recipient the right to hold a University Bursary for a period of four years, are awarded entirely under a system of accrediting, the application of which demands careful inquiry and attention from the Inspectors.

UNIVERSITY ENTRANCE AND ACCREDITING.

The University Senate has recently approved of a scheme of accrediting whereby pupils from certain approved schools who have completed at least four years of secondary education may be recommended by their Principals for a pass in the University Entrance Examination. The examination, however, will still continue to be held for the benefit of those who are not pupils at an approved school, for those who are not attending a school or, if attending, have not been recommended or accredited, and for those who have not completed their fourth year of schooling. The scheme undoubtedly has advantages—it will ease the burden of examination work borne by the University and it will free a large number of individual candidates from the ordeal of an external test.