

population was entering the secondary schools and when many of those who did attend were specially selected scholarship pupils, it did not seriously matter that this very academic and restricted examination came to dominate the work of the schools.

One of the distinctive features of New Zealand education, however, over the past thirty years has been the steady increase in the number of pupils taking advantage of the increasingly generous provision for free secondary education. In 1943 no less than 76 per cent. of the children leaving primary schools and 82 per cent. of those leaving intermediate schools and departments, went on to a full-time secondary course. This has raised a completely new problem. The great majority of these pupils probably have not the slightest intention of going on to University. All they want is a good secondary course which will round off their formal education and prepare them for immediate entrance to the world of industry and commerce. For these pupils the demands of the University Entrance Examination, the measure of fitness for University work, were purposeless, for courses devised for the highly-selected and academically-minded few are seldom well adapted to the needs of the many. Unfortunately, by the time this problem was fully recognized the University Entrance Examination had secured a grip not only upon the schools, but also upon the imagination of parents and employers, who demanded the hallmark of the University Entrance Examination for their children or junior employees, although what they really needed in most cases was a measure of a satisfactorily completed secondary course, and not the "open sesame" to University studies. By insisting upon the University Entrance qualification they all too often condemned children to studies for which they had neither interest nor aptitude nor use.

In 1934 the Department endeavoured to meet the situation by instituting the School Certificate Examination. By offering a much wider choice of subjects than the University Entrance Examination, it tried to tempt non-academic children away from studies for which they had no aptitude. The new examination failed to capture the imagination of parents and employers and, although its standard was no lower, it remained a poor relation of the University Entrance Examination. With the action of the University Senate in abolishing the University Entrance Examination as we now know it, the School Certificate should at last come into its own as the mark of a completed secondary course for those who are not contemplating University studies. Those students intending to enter the University will normally stay on at school one year beyond the School Certificate stage. These students will either be accredited or, if they cannot be accredited, will be permitted to sit a new and specialized University Entrance Examination which is being instituted at the higher level.

It was immediately obvious that to replace the old University Entrance Examination for general purposes, the School Certificate Examination would have to be greatly altered. For one thing, the first nineteen subjects for the old School Certificate Examination were defined "as for University Entrance," but it by no means follows that the treatment of any single subject should be the same for those who are going to continue that study at the University as for those who are dropping the study of it after Form V. So I set up the Consultative Committee on the Post-Primary Curriculum for the purpose of recommending a syllabus for a new School Certificate Examination which should frankly recognize that the post-primary school as we know it has two functions—first, to prepare a minority of the pupils for University education, and second, to prepare the remainder for immediate participation in adult life and labour.

It was no easy task to devise a syllabus that would enable every school to carry out both these functions. The Committee, which sat under the Chairmanship of Mr. W. Thomas, M.A., LL.B., presented its report in December, 1943, and I believe that it is the most important contribution that has ever been made to secondary education in New Zealand. After any necessary amendments have been made as a result of consideration and criticism of the report by the public, the recommendations of the committee will be embodied in regulations that can come into operation in 1945. From its initial reception I have every reason to believe that the report has, in the main, the support of the teaching profession. I should like to place on record the Government's deep appreciation of the services rendered to education by the members of the Committee.

Vocational Guidance.—The rapid increase in the proportion of the population entering secondary schools, besides necessitating a recasting of the secondary curriculum, has also made it essential to provide a system of educational and vocational guidance, for the schools have had to develop a wide variety of courses to cater for the varying needs of the flood of entrants, and children and their parents find themselves compelled at each stage to make a choice of alternative courses, a choice in the making of which they often feel the need for advice and assistance. So the Education Department during the year assumed the full control of the Youth Centres, which it had previously controlled conjointly with the National Service Department. Since then the staffs of the Centres (now called Vocational Guidance Centres) have been greatly strengthened and their activities expanded. In each Centre there are now full-time Vocational Guidance Officers who, acting in conjunction with headmasters and special careers teachers in the schools, offer their services at any point in the child's career where a choice has to be made, whether of school course or of vocation. When the child has made his choice of career, the Vocational Guidance Officer tries to find suitable employment for him and follow up his progress until he is finally and satisfactorily settled in his line of work. I believe that the Vocational Guidance Centres are giving a valuable service to the children of New Zealand and save large numbers from the unhappy fate of a lifetime spent in work for which they have neither aptitude nor taste. Needless, to say, no parent or child need make use of the Vocational Guidance Centres for vocational guidance unless he desires. During the year the Centres assumed new and important functions in connection with rehabilitation of returned servicemen. Working in conjunction with the Education Committee of the Rehabilitation Board (on which the Education Department is represented), the Vocational Guidance Officers report on applications by servicemen for bursaries and scholarships, and where any man is not considered suitable for the educational facilities for which he asks, they make every effort to help him find some other line of training for which he is better fitted. This work is steadily increasing, and every effort is being made to train new Vocational Guidance Officers to take up the strain when full demobilization begins.

Raising of the School Age. The minimum school-leaving age was raised to fifteen years as from 1st February, 1944, with the proviso that no child who had reached the age of fourteen by that date should be affected. The only exemption allowed is for a child who has attained the age of fourteen years, who has completed the work of Form II, and who, in the opinion of the Director of Education, is not likely to derive any appreciable benefit from any available educational facilities.