

It will be realized that for the first time some period of secondary education is now compulsory for nearly all children. The debate in the House of Representatives showed that this measure met with wide approval. It is recognized that steps will have to be taken to meet temporary difficulties until a full building programme is begun again and all our teachers return from the Armed Forces.

Technical Education.—The technical schools are at the cross-roads. In the four main centres at least they have come to the end of the path they have followed fairly consistently for forty years. As far as their day-time classes are concerned they have never pretended to correspond to the technical schools of England or the Continent, but have set out to provide for the non-academic type of child a general secondary education with a practical bias. But now the technical high schools in the four main cities have outgrown their accommodation and must divide up in some way. The question is, which way? Shall they each split into two schools of the same type as the present schools, or shall they divide into specialized schools catering each for a narrow range of courses? Or, again, shall they shed their lower forms and concentrate on building up their senior work until they take on something of the nature of technological institutes? The answer to this question depends largely on what industry is going to demand of the technical schools in the future. This raises the whole question of apprenticeship. Since the factors involved are at once so vital and so complex, the Hon. the Minister of Labour and I have decided to recommend the setting-up of a Commission on Apprenticeship and Technical Education to commence its sittings in 1944. The future of technical education in the larger cities at least will depend in large measure upon its findings.

Kindergartens and Nursery Schools.—An interesting development during the year was the conversion of two free kindergartens in the Wellington area into all-day nursery schools to cater for children of mothers engaged in work of national importance. Although there had been great public demand for such nursery schools, the response, once they opened, was fairly slow: one now has a short waiting-list, but the other is not yet full to capacity. This would lead one to suppose that there is, in normal times, likely to be little real demand for nursery-school facilities outside one or two areas in some of the main cities. The two in Wellington are being excellently conducted, and I am most grateful to the Wellington Free Kindergarten Association for the readiness with which they undertook, at my request, this very useful experiment. The Government is bearing the additional expense involved.

The number of kindergarten trainees to whom the Government pays allowances was increased in 1943 from thirty-nine to eighty. The supply of trained kindergarteners will determine in large part the speed at which the kindergarten system can be extended. An increased grant to kindergarten associations was made during the year.

There was during the year a significant increase in the number of nursery play-centres, which are places where mothers can, for a small fee, leave their pre-school children on one or two afternoons a week. They are conducted and financed by voluntary effort, and their rapid growth is evidence that they are meeting a genuine need.

Primary School Curriculum and Free Text-books.—As stated in my last report, the whole primary school curriculum is being systematically reviewed by a number of committees representative of the Department and of teachers' organizations. The report of the Arithmetic Syllabus Revision Committee was the first to be adopted, and during 1944 a full series of arithmetic text-books will be issued to the primary schools. The Government has decided to issue these and all other primary text-books produced under this scheme completely free to pupils in all schools, both State and private. A Health Education Committee was set up in 1943, and committees on English and the social studies will follow, preparatory to the issue of text-books on these subjects. After a reduction in the size of classes I know of no single need of the primary schools that is more urgent than good text-books.

School Library Service.—The School Library Service, controlled by the Country Library Service, has continued to do excellent work. Books are increasingly difficult to import, but although the Service started only in 1942, by the end of 1943 books were being distributed to 36,878 children in 620 schools in the country and town districts or boroughs with a population of less than ten thousand.

Teaching Aids, Art, and Handwork.—In spite of difficulties of supply there was a steady increase during the year in the number of films and film strips available to schools, and schools are buying projectors as quickly as they can be manufactured or imported. Instructional courses in the use of teaching aids were held in many parts of New Zealand. I should like to acknowledge the valuable co-operation of the National Broadcasting Service in the provision of special broadcasts to schools for three and a quarter hours a week.

Further progress was made in the provision of equipment and materials for art and handwork. The most notable event in this field during the year was the institution, in conjunction with the Wellington Education Board, of a long-term demonstration in the teaching of art and handwork in a Hutt Valley school. The Department provided all the necessary equipment, and a specialist teacher was added to the staff of the school. The results were so successful that at the request of the Hutt Valley Headmasters' Association all the schools in the Hutt Valley will be given similar facilities in 1944. If the scheme is successful in these schools, further demonstration centres will be opened in other Board districts.

A conference of training college lecturers in art and handwork was held during the year to discuss new developments.

Physical Education.—There were in 1943, forty-two teachers in the primary-school system engaged full time on physical education. Promising beginnings have been made in the extension of the new physical work to the post-primary schools, many of which are showing great interest in it. Useful refresher and training courses were held in many places.

Handicapped Children.—The number of special classes and speech clinics was increased during 1943. A visiting teacher from the Correspondence School was placed in Auckland to visit the homes of crippled children and assist them with their studies. It seems probable that this service will have to be extended as staffing permits. The School for the Deaf continues in two parts, one in Christchurch and one in temporary premises outside Auckland. I believe there is need for a permanent School for the Deaf in Auckland, and am having the necessary inquiries made.

Correspondence School.—The Department's Correspondence School continues to do good work for country children and invalid children. At the end of the year there were 1,941 pupils on the primary roll, 486 on the secondary, and 996 taking part-time courses. It was found possible during the year to restore the very useful visiting-teacher system and to reinstitute courses in woodwork.