

Perhaps the most regrettable feature of war conditions has been the inability to train and retain a sufficient number of teachers to reduce the size of the large classes in the schools in the upper middle and higher grades. The training colleges are filled to capacity, as the young men must be afforded the opportunity of training, but, as stated before, their services are soon lost to the schools. Each year a large number join the Forces, and there are now between 800 and 900 young teachers in the Forces who have not yet completed their training, or who do not hold permanent positions, but occupy only nominal ones to safeguard their status as teachers. When the war is over there will be an ample number of teachers to provide a more liberal staffing schedule and to augment the educational facilities of the schools.

At present consideration is being given to the question of the rehabilitation of soldier teachers. A few have already returned. The proposals include provision for those who desire to spend a period in a training college, in selected schools, or in both, in order that they may be able to settle down again in the profession as smoothly and efficiently as possible.

*The Curriculum and the Child.*—The beneficial results of the freedom accorded to teachers are becoming more discernible. The curriculum has been enriched and expanded. While there have been some losses, there has been a greater number of gains. The biggest handicaps, as most teachers assert, are the large classes, congested class-rooms, and the youth and inexperience of a large section of the teaching personnel. The chief gains may be summed up in the words of one Senior Inspector: "Teachers can organize group activities, develop individual responsibility and leadership, encourage independent investigations in the form of projects, visits, and rambles, arrange debates and discussions, make contacts with other schools, organize pupil councils and committees, and at all times stimulate the habit of reading and the power of expression. It is a delight to spend a day in such schools where the children do so much, and the teacher (apparently) so little, where personality, general interests, and general character are being fully developed, and where education in the best sense is being carried on." The losses mentioned in one or two district reports are somewhat less ability on the part of pupils to concentrate on and carry out the more serious forms of mechanical tasks, and less accuracy in spelling and arithmetic. In other districts it is asserted that there is no marked falling off in accuracy, but that apparent loss is accounted for by the fact that there is a wider range of ability among pupils of to-day in, for instance, Form II than there was in the days of the Proficiency Examination, when pupils were not so readily promoted and given the opportunity of working in higher classes. The transition from the old to the new is still in process, and when it is clearly understood that the schools of to-day are, or should be, organized to give educational opportunities to every pupil whether bright, average, or backward, there is no real cause for alarm. The privilege and responsibility for granting Primary School Certificates (replacing the old Proficiency) are in the hands of the teachers, and in general this is wisely carried out. A few instances of misuse are not adequate grounds for making general statements that standards of school work are falling. It must be stressed, too, that there is nothing in modern educational thought and practice that condones slipshod or inaccurate work on the part of the pupils. Primacy of place in the various aims of education must be accorded to that which states that every child is expected to do the very best work he can, according to his ability. To quote one instance of how children less academically gifted than their fellows were given an opportunity, a group of older Standard IV boys, who apparently had reached their limit in academic school work in this class, was drafted to the Form III engineering class in a technical school, where they made fine progress. To judge these boys educationally on Form III academic standards would be both harsh and unfair.

During the year a new syllabus in arithmetic for primary schools was issued, its purpose being to provide a foundation of mechanical accuracy as a basis for application to processes in practical and social situations of real life. Formal number in infant classes is to be abolished, and the approach made through play-way activities and experiences to develop an understanding of the use of number. The syllabus will not be made compulsory until the new text-books have been issued and an adequate supply of material and apparatus provided. In this connection, much material, including toys, has been made for the use of infant classes.

A committee set up to revise the syllabus for health-teaching in the schools has almost completed its work. It is desired to inculcate health habits through healthy living, and to effect a greater co-ordination between the work of the Health Department and that of the schools.

*District High and Intermediate Schools: Special Classes.*—With the abolition of the requirement for a compulsory foreign language for University Entrance and for most of the University courses, teachers in district high schools will be able to frame courses that fit to a greater degree the needs of the pupils. These schools are one of the best features of our educational system, but owing to the restrictive influence of external examinations the staffs, often comprising one, two, or three teachers, have been unable to find time for the provision of more liberal courses, including agricultural and domestic pursuits and the more cultural studies in art, crafts, and music.

Fine work is being accomplished in the intermediate schools, which are also becoming a special feature of education in New Zealand. Two large new schools were opened during the year, and there is a demand for more in various districts. One of the outstanding trends in these schools is the important place given to practical forms of instruction. A varied range of crafts includes even bookbinding and printing, some of the pamphlets and magazines produced comparing most favourably with those printed by the trade. Homecrafts have been extended to include the running of model flats, and even a nursery centre for a period each week.

Despite war conditions, facilities for the education of handicapped children have been extended. Forty-eight special classes for backward children, as well as three occupation centres for children too backward for special classes, are in operation; thirteen speech clinics for the treatment of speech defects are functioning, four new ones being opened during the year. There are now two schools for the deaf, one in each Island. Nineteen classes are attached to hospitals, and there is one full-time health-camp school fully staffed and equipped, and for most of the seasonal or short-period health camps educational facilities are provided. A full-time school for physically-handicapped children has accomplished valuable experimental work in ascertaining the most suitable forms of diet. The Correspondence School assists with the education of those unable to attend special classes or schools and has taken over the greater part of the education of crippled children.