

is in large measure the result of the deliberate policy of promoting children on the basis of age and physical and emotional development rather than on academic attainment. It is now very rare to find the "dunce" of thirteen or fourteen dragging out in Standard 4 the miserable days before he is legally permitted to leave school. He is promoted to a higher class and allowed to work there at his own best rate. I thoroughly approve of this policy on general educational and humanitarian grounds, but there is no denying that it creates special problems for the teacher of the higher classes, and that the average level of academic ability in Forms I and II is reduced by the admission of pupils who are not intellectually up to the standard required for the work of these classes. In any discussion of comparative standards of work it would be unfair to the primary schools to overlook this factor.

With reference to the moot question of standards of work, my report for the year 1944-45 showed the influence of the war on the work of the schools and set out in some detail the steps being taken by the Department to maintain and improve standards in the "tool" subjects. There is evidence that this drive for better standards is having effect. The steps taken during the year to assist teachers to raise standards in the primary school include the following :—

(a) The staffing schedules were improved by making provision for some 450 new positions for men teachers, 200 of them being Grade A positions. This move not only made for a reduction in the size of classes, but also gave new openings for returned servicemen.

(b) The revision of the primary-school syllabus by joint expert committees of departmental officers and teachers was pressed forward in 1946. The committees on spelling, needlework, and history and geography reported during the year, and their reports have been published in a preliminary form for the comment and criticism of the teaching profession. A tentative art scheme has been issued. The work of the committees on nature study and elementary science and on reading and literature is nearing completion, and a new committee has been set up to deal with the teaching of writing.

(c) It was planned to follow up the work of each committee by issuing new text-books and teachers' manuals based on the new syllabus and the new methods adopted. Unfortunately, difficulties of printing and binding have slowed down the publication programme. During the year the last of the series of arithmetic books was issued, and the Standard 1 text-book in written English was put into the schools. All the rest of the English books have been prepared, and some have been printed and only await binding. The *School Journal* was virtually doubled in size as from February.

(d) Initial steps have been taken in some districts towards the preparation of standardized tests in the tool subjects. The issue of formal tests and norms will have to be delayed in some subjects until the changes resulting from the Syllabus Committee's reports have become established in the schools. It has been felt up to the present that the nation-wide use of standardized tests might unduly restrict teachers who were struggling to rid their teaching of the evil effects of the old Proficiency Examination. It seems, however, that the time has now arrived when the judicious use of standardized tests in the tool subjects would help teachers to plan their work more effectively.

(e) Funds were granted to enable two refresher courses for primary-school headmasters to be held during January, 1947.

(f) Inspectors of Schools have been instructed to pay special attention to the teaching of the tool subjects in their districts.

Among advances of a more general nature made in the primary-school service during the year are the following :—

(1) Greatly increased maintenance grants for school buildings were made to Education Boards to enable them to overtake arrears of work that had accumulated during the war. The total maintenance grant paid out for the year ending 31st March, 1947, was £288,692, as against £250,888 for the previous year.