

REPORT

Two groups of problems loom so large on the educational horizon that it might be well to deal with them first before passing on to a brief survey of educational developments during 1947. First, there are those connected with the recent rapid rise in the number of births in the Dominion, and, secondly, the even more complex problems resulting from the great increase in the proportion of children going on to post-primary education.

Rise in Number of Births

The recent annual figures for the number of non-Maori births in New Zealand are well known, from the low point of 23,900 in 1935 to the temporary peak of 35,100 in 1941, and then after a slight falling off, the dramatic rise to 44,800 in 1947. The effects of the fluctuating birth-rate upon primary-school enrolments are, however, best shown by taking the number of births in eight-year periods instead of annually, since the normal length of primary-school life is eight years. The following table shows, on the left, the total number of births (Maori and non-Maori) in each eight-year period, beginning with 1st July, 1929–1937, and ending with 1st July, 1939–1947. On the right is given, opposite each period, the total number of pupils at public primary schools (including Maori schools) of ages between five and under thirteen years in the year when the children born in that period might normally be expected to be distributed somewhere between Primer 1 and Form II; in the second column on the right are added the total number of pupils at these schools of ages of thirteen years and over. The enrolments for the years 1948–52 are, of course, only estimates, but can be presumed to be reasonably accurate :—

Births.		Public-school Enrolments.			
Number.	Eight-year Period.	Year.	Ages 5 and under 13.	Ages 13 and over.	Total Number.
225,200	1929–1937	1942	185,420	25,170	210,590
226,700	1930–1938	1943	183,700	25,090	208,790
229,700	1931–1939	1944	185,200	24,250	209,450
237,300	1932–1940	1945	190,360	23,550	213,910
248,000	1933–1941	1946	198,140	22,170	220,310
258,400	1934–1942	1947	211,300	20,000	231,300
<i>Estimates</i>					
267,500	1935–1943	1948	218,600	19,700	238,300
276,000	1936–1944	1949	225,600	19,600	245,200
286,700	1937–1945	1950	234,300	19,700	254,000
300,900	1938–1946	1951	245,900	20,100	266,000
317,700	1939–1947	1952	259,500	20,800	280,300

Whilst every New Zealander can regard this rapid increase in births with satisfaction, it must be admitted that, coming at the present time, it makes many difficulties for educational administration. As far as school accommodation is concerned we have not yet recovered from the serious setback resulting from the war, and yet we must somehow not only catch up this leeway, but also prepare for record attendances within the next four years. It is estimated that, by 1952, we shall need in primary and intermediate schools some two thousand class-rooms, plus all subsidiary accommodation.