

Second, promotion from class to class and from primary school to post-primary school is no longer dependent solely on examination success. It will be remembered that in the 1920's there was a public outcry at the extent of retardation in the schools. As a result, teachers were encouraged to promote children from standard to standard, providing their ability in English was sufficiently good to permit them to work effectively in the higher class. In 1936, with the abolition of the Proficiency Examination, the road was finally open to promotion by age and attainment rather than by attainment alone. This was beneficial to children who had been kept in the lower classes year after year simply because they could not pass the necessary examinations. Owing to these "social" promotions, classes to-day contain a much wider range of intellectual ability than was the case twenty years ago. A class can no longer be handled as a unit. The upper level is still capable of and attains a high standard of work. Real standards for all children have improved, but there are children in each class to-day who, if a fair comparison with the past is to be made, must be compared with those of similar intellectual ability who twenty years ago would have been found in classes lower in the schools.

A committee of a conference of Inspectors of Schools held in August, 1947, confirmed this change in the level of standards, but at the same time reported improvement in standards of achievement in many aspects of the curriculum. The committee stressed the continued need for objective teaching, regular and systematic drills, close application, steady concentration, persistent industry, and the development of those habits which inspire a child to be satisfied only with the best he can achieve. The committee considered that some of the factors contributing to improvements in standard of work were as follows :—

- (1) The more friendly and congenial atmosphere of the schoolroom and the happier and more natural relations existing between teacher and pupil.
- (2) The erection of more modern and brighter schoolrooms and the increased attention to environment, both inside and outside the school.
- (3) The provision of teaching equipment in larger quantities.
- (4) The better type of literature now being written for primary-school children and dealing with topics specially suited to their interests.
- (5) The work of specialist teachers.
- (6) The establishment of intermediate schools with greater opportunities for ability grouping and remedial teaching.

TEACHER TRAINING AND SUPPLY

In 1946 each of the four training colleges was filled to capacity. In view of the rapidly increasing birth-rate, it became evident that existing training facilities were inadequate. A fifth training college was necessary, and plans were made during the year to open in 1948 a residential college at the R.N.Z.A.F. Station, Ardmore, to cater for 250 students. This will make it possible to admit to training almost 1,100 students in 1948. Special endeavours are being made to recruit this large number. Unfortunately, the urgent need for class-teachers has meant the restriction of places available for the training of students in specialist subjects such as physical education, music, &c. In 1947, specialist studentships were available in speech therapy, education of the deaf, and art and crafts. The training colleges continue to make positive contributions to education as a whole, and their emphasis is rightly placed on growing personality and scholarship no less than on preparation for class-room work. Nevertheless, the time has arrived for a critical examination of the content and adequacy of our teacher-training to remedy both the obvious and less apparent weaknesses. It is hoped that the suggestion made last year for the exchange for limited periods of time of members of the college staffs and the inspectorate will be adopted next year.