

Administration

During the past year the new administrative reorganization in the Department has been tested, adjusted, and consolidated. Few aspects of our social life are static, and as social conditions and social needs change the educational system designed to equip young people to live in the modern community must alter and adapt itself. In their turn administrative organization and administrative methods within the education service must be made flexible and responsive to the changing demands which they must meet. Recent years have seen rapid developments in educational methods, but, partly because of the man-power shortage resulting from the war and partly because for the moment attention was concentrated on other things, adjustments to the administrative system have lagged.

Re-examination of working methods has extended to the relationships between the Department and local education authorities. As one example I may mention that the system of grants to Education Boards had over the years become complicated as grants for different purposes were instituted, added to, or altered piecemeal. After the working of the existing system had been studied and discussed with Education Board Secretaries a simpler system was devised and put into effect at the beginning of 1949. Similar changes have been made in post-primary-school grants after discussion with representatives of the Post-primary School Boards at their 1948 Conference and in consultation with a small committee of Secretaries of Boards. The Department and the local controlling Boards are engaged in closely related aspects of the same administrative task, and their closer association in devising simpler and more effective administrative arrangements can be productive of much good.

The Pre-school Child

To assist the New Zealand Federation of Nursery Play Centres' Associations in the development and care of the pre-school child a special annual grant of £1,000 was made available for equipment.

The Free Kindergarten Associations, which hitherto had received a capitation grant on the average roll number of pupils, were placed in a stronger position to expand their services by the Government assuming the responsibility for the salaries of teachers in lieu of the capitation grant.

At the same time the subsidy of £1 for £1 paid on expenditure for sites, buildings, and equipment was raised to £2 for £1.

There are now in New Zealand sixteen Free Kindergarten Associations operating over eighty schools.

Primary Education

The upward trend in the school population is having marked effects on the primary schools. The actual increase this year in the school population was 5,774, which adds cumulatively to already existing problems of staffing, buildings, and the supply of equipment. Elsewhere I have mentioned the steps that are being taken to close the gap between our educational resources and the needs of the schools. Long-term plans are necessary, particularly to maintain staffing, and they are being made. One aspect of staffing that has met with a considerable measure of success has been the efforts made to ensure the rehabilitation of teachers and trainees who served in the Armed Forces. Special refresher courses at the training-colleges eased returned servicemen back into the class-room, and at the same time their service, superannuation, and grading rights were carefully safeguarded. The rehabilitation, now practically complete, of some two thousand servicemen is, I consider, a performance in which we may justly take some pride. The servicemen themselves have faced up admirably to the changed conditions they have found in the schools after several years' absence.