

The in-service training of teachers was continued by refresher courses, organized by the Teachers' Refresher Course Committee. In January, 1949, courses for Grade II and Grade III sole-charge and head teachers, for primary and intermediate school assistants, and for art and crafts specialists were held.

Three special courses, each of a week's duration, were arranged at Wallis House, Lower Hutt. Each group of twenty, comprising senior headmasters and officers of the Department, discussed various aspects of primary education, including basic aims and their application in school organization and class-room practice. These courses followed a similar series of three in which Inspectors of Schools had participated. The discussions were of great value. They were extended further afield by the visit to the Dominion at the invitation of the Government, in conjunction with the New Education Fellowship, of Mr. James Hemming, Research Officer of the Association for Education in Citizenship, Great Britain. Mr. Hemming visited various parts of the country and initiated discussion with groups of headmasters, principally on human relations in school and class-room.

Two other overseas visitors to New Zealand contributed very valuable assistance in special aspects of the curriculum. Miss L. de Rusette was an inspiration to teachers of infants in her demonstrations of percussion band music. Dr. E. L. Palmer, Professor of Rural Education at Cornell University, United States of America, gave to Parent-Teacher Associations and to city and country teachers lectures and demonstrations which will prove a stimulus to the teaching of nature-study in this country. At Auckland and Wellington, at which were assembled the district agricultural instructors and the training college lecturers in nature-study, he conducted courses each of a week's duration. These courses were of immense value at the particular moment when new science and nature-study syllabuses had been introduced into the schools.

The Consultative Committee on the Training of Teachers, which was set up by the Minister of Education in November, 1948, began its sessions early in 1949. The Committee took oral evidence in the four main centres and visited the five training colleges. It is expected that the Committee will complete its deliberations and bring down its report in 1950.

IV. THE WORK OF THE SCHOOLS

These comments on the work of the primary schools are taken from the annual reports of the Senior Inspectors of the various Education Board districts :—

I. STANDARDS OF WORK

Basic Skills.—In written expression pupils are being systematically taught to write a plain thing in a plain way—accurately, and with reference to real-life situations. The formal aspects of language as the tool of thought are carefully treated and the need for care and accuracy in spelling continues to be stressed. Oral expression is coming to be recognized as the pivotal point round which work in all subjects revolves, and reading, from the practical activities of the infant-room to the intensive treatment of comprehension in the upper classes, shows steady progress. There is still a need for improvement in writing, but a gradual improvement is resulting from the emphasis which has been placed on free-arm and rhythmical methods.

We are unanimously of opinion that a general improvement of standards in the fundamental subjects is apparent throughout the whole educational district and embracing all types of schools, both city and rural.

We are pleased, too, to note the increased attention being paid to accuracy in detail and care and neatness in the setting out of written work.

Diagnosis in Arithmetic.—A sub-committee of headmasters convened by an Inspector conducted a diagnostic arithmetic investigation in the four fundamental rules, using Schonell's Diagnostic Tests. Four thousand five hundred children in Standards 2, 3, 4, and Form I were tested. Based on the frequency of error, the 100 possible combinations of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division were each arranged in decreasing order of difficulty. Norms of accuracy and speed for various ages and similar approximate norms for standards were calculated. In the schools tested, teachers were supplied with a sheet for each child, showing his individual errors in each operation, together with a comparison between his accuracy and speed and that of the norms found by Schonell. The "order-of-difficulty" tables were circulated to teachers early in the year, and the norms as found by the inquiry are ready for circulation. The tables are proving particularly useful, in that teachers have a valuable guide to the combinations in which most practice must be given to ensure that they be